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JULY 2016



THE ORLANDO ISSUE

#ENOUGH



ON THE COVER

This month's issue is dedicated to the victims and survivors of Orlando.

Original cover artwork by Nick San Pedro.

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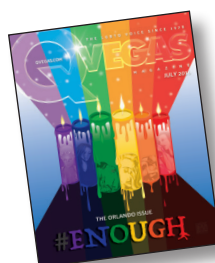
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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

In the same month we celebrate the 1st anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decisions that granted nationwide marriage equality, the same month cities around the world celebrate gay pride, in the same month that President Obama named Stonewall National Monument the first landmark recognizing LGBTQ right, our community was attacked.

Not tied to a fence and left for dead. Not chased down the street with a baseball bat. Not gay bashed.

Mass Murdered. On our own turf.

How this crime against us plays out is yet to be seen. The shooter is dead, so there will be no justice for the victims.

Gay bars are our scared space. For many people just coming out, they are the only place to feel safe. Our safe space was violated.

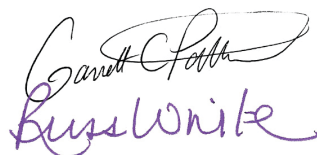
We mourn for the atrocity in Orlando. Our hearts go out to the families and friends and the entire community of Central Florida.

But we are resilient. We survive. We act up. We create change. In the days and weeks that followed the shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, we have already seen change. Countless vigils and fund raisers helped bear the costs of burying loved ones.

This month, we dedicate this issue to Orlando. We asked Nick San Pedro to create our cover this month. Six rainbow candles cast shadows on the grieving characters while 49 stars shine above for each of the victims.

Eighteen individuals from Las Vegas and around the country contributed their collective voice.

These writings are from their heart and their souls. We thank each of them for taking the time to share with us and you their thought, feelings, and experiences about Orlando.



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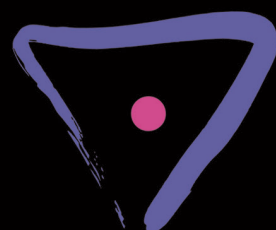
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Searsucker: A carefree fabric popular for its ease and comfort.

Searsucker: Chef Brian Malarkey's Las Vegas eatery, popular for its carefree social dining experience, easygoing atmosphere, and a menu of New American Classics - comfort food with a modern twist!

Located in the casino at Caesar's Palace, and modeled after Malarkey's original restaurant in San Diego, Searsucker was indeed a comfortable space, with a warm, artistically haphazard decor, featuring exposed brick walls, distressed wood accents, a pressed tin ceiling above the open kitchen, and deconstructed chandeliers of rope and bare bulbs with happily glowing filaments, while on the wall in front of me, big letters that looked scavenged from Vegas' neon boneyard,

spelled out E-A-T.

Erik, my server, started me off with a cocktail from their list of house-made infusions; the Jalaberry Strawpeño - strawberry jalapeño infused tequila, lime, and agave. At first taste, the jalapeño came on strong, packing a wallop, while the strawberry flavor was much more subtle; almost in the background. But as the drink mellowed a bit, the flavors combined to reveal a nice balance of sweet and hot. The sliced pepper and strawberry garnish was tasty, too!

I thought I'd try some items from the Jars & Sliced section of the menu, and then a couple of the Shared Plates, beginning perhaps with an order of their Biscuits. Erik set me right however, telling me the biscuits were fairly large, and came four to an order - maybe a bit much for one person. He then went out of his way to ask the



kitchen if they'd send out an order of just one biscuit, which they did! Quite possibly one of the best biscuits I've tried, it was hearty, buttery, and flaky, with just a hint of saltiness. Accompanied by whipped butter with a pinch of coarse salt, and a spectacular bourbon-Fresno chili infused honey, it hit on almost every cylinder: salty, sweet, spicy, and down-home richness. Comfort food, indeed!

Next came the Beef Tartare & Grilled Sourdough - raw, rough-cut beef tenderloin, with whole grain mustard, roasted capers, and raw quail egg yolk. Another satisfying dish; the

super-fresh, beautifully pink chunks of beef took on a luxurious creaminess, when mixed with the egg and mustard. The roasted capers and the slight char on the crispy slabs of grilled bread, gave the beef a smoky depth of flavor, while the habanero pickles served on the side, provided heat and a bit of acidity to counter the richness of the beef, making each bite well rounded. Instead of the Shrimp Ceviche & Toast I had planned on ordering, my server recommended what he considered one of the best dishes on the menu: the Calamari Steak - rolls of calamari steak,



Michael Barbieri is the author of MyVegasObsession.com and has been a contributing writer for QVegas since October 2012. A resident of New York City, Michael frequents Vegas many times per year, journalizing his adventures in hotels, spas, shows, and restaurants along the way.





pounded until tender, crusted in panko crumbs, deep fried, then coated in an addictive chili-honey glaze. Slivers of green apple added a lovely tartness which allowed my palate to readjust, so I could savor the deliciously spicy sweetness of the calamari with each new bite!

Moving on to my main course, Eric suggested I try one of Searsucker's signature dishes, and while the Beer Braised Short Ribs sounded tempting, I opted for the Fish & Chips. Made with branzino instead of the more commonly used cod, the fish was firm and had a more delicate flavor, but still stood up nicely to the batter and the house-made tartare sauce. Rather than traditional chips (what most Americans would consider french fries,) there were tasty waffle-cut sweet potato chips, which contrasted nicely with the bite of both the tartare sauce and the accompanying vinegar-based slaw. The presentation was gorgeous, too, with the deep fried branzino carcass artfully wrapped around the five crunchy pieces of fish, as if in mid-flip! If I had one negative criticism, it was that the dish, while fine at first, ate saltier and saltier as I got into it. The salt in the tartare sauce and on the chips, had me gulping water after each bite. That little detail, however, didn't put a damper on my meal, which I still enjoyed immensely!

Then it was time for dessert: the S'mores Bar! Layers of graham cracker cake, chocolate mousse,

chocolate ganache, and caramel, topped with marshmallow piping and chocolate pearls, with chocolate ice cream on the side. Imagine the most sophisticated s'more you've ever encountered; one crafted by an artist. There was a fabulous interplay of flavors and textures - the familiar, homey taste of the graham cracker, the light whip of the mousse, the thick, rich, deeply chocolatey ganache, the sweet caramel, and the toasty flavor of the lightly bruléed marshmallow, all came together to create a decadent treat! Yummy!

What made Searsucker so memorable? Well, the food, most certainly, But just as important, was the staff - the hostess, who was cheerful and welcoming, the Executive Sous Chef, Caesar, who stopped by the table to make sure I was enjoying my dinner, and the servers, including Erik, whose personalized attention made my dining experience special, fun, and yes, very comfortable! And when I looked around, I saw him giving his other tables the same devoted attention he'd given me, making them feel special, too!

Amazing staff? Check! Homey ambience? Check! Diverse menu of New American Classic comfort food? Check!

Searsucker invites folks to "come early, stay late," so I'm planning to go back soon, get comfy, and do just that!

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THE VENETIAN®



A longtime resident of Las Vegas, Dawn Christensen has been active in the LGBT community since 2004. Ever since coming out to her family and friends nearly 15 years ago, Dawn has dedicated much of her personal and professional time to supporting and advancing LGBT causes.

Dawn joined MGM Resorts International in 2015 as director of National Diversity Relations. In her role, she works closely with national, state and local nonprofit organizations, including those that actively support the LGBT community, including The Gay and Lesbian Center of Southern Nevada, Human Rights Campaign, Southern Nevada Association of Pride, Inc., and The Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce Nevada, as well as other cultural and minority organizations.

One of her responsibilities at MGM Resorts is to plan the annual Women's Leadership Conference. We caught up with Dawn to talk about plans for this year.

QVegas: What is the MGM Women's Leadership Conference?

Dawn: It's an annual conference that seeks to

provide women with professional development, networking opportunities, inspiration and support. The goal is to give women the tools they need to grow their careers. That's something that MGM Resorts International believes in as a company. Forty-three percent of MGM Resorts management are women. At the company's board level, 27 percent of our Directors are women. While that number is higher than many other companies, we are dedicated to helping further tip the scales toward equality. The conference is marking its 10th year. It's sponsored by the MGM Resorts Foundation, which donates all proceeds after costs to a local nonprofit dedicated to helping women and children.

QVegas: Who should attend?

Dawn: We welcome everyone, women and men,



Conference celebrates 10th Anniversary in 2016

at all levels of professional development. This conference has something for everyone, whether you're just starting your career or you've reached the top in your industry. People benefit from the range of experience our attendees have; it's a great place to find a mentor or a mentee.

QVegas: Is attendance limited to women?

Dawn: Not at all! Men do attend and find a lot of value in the programming. We offer workshops that cover everything from building a personal brand and finding your next job, to asking for a raise and balancing your work/life demands. These are topics that appeal to both women and men in the workforce.

QVegas: What is your role at MGM Resorts and with the conference?

Dawn: I'm the director of national diversity relations for MGM Resorts International. I'm a member of a team that's responsible for building and enhancing MGM Resorts' relationships with our diversity and inclusion partners at the local, state and national levels. We support organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign, The Center, the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and the Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce of Nevada, among others. I'm incredibly fortunate to be in this role. It's work that's very personal to me and makes a difference in our community.

I also have the honor of being the program administrator for Women's Leadership

Conference, where I work with a passionate and dedicated committee of several dozen MGM Resorts colleagues who are responsible for different aspects of the conference planning and execution.

QVegas: Have you attended the conference in the past?

Dawn: I've experienced different aspects of the conference over the years. We're so lucky to have an event like this in our own backyard! I encourage anyone thinking about attending to register today before it sells out.

QVegas: What excites you the most about this year's conference?

Dawn: We're incredibly proud of the exceptional line-up of speakers who will appear at the conference. Also, I'm excited about celebrating a decade of this transformational event. Our main stage speakers bring a wide variety of experience and perspective that will resonate with the audience.

From political consultant Donna Brazile to Adrienne Haslet, survivor of the Boston Marathon bombing – and several other speakers we will announce soon – we have stories of courage and perseverance that will inspire and motivate. We also have an accomplished and respected panel of senior women executives providing practical career advice. The excitement and energy at this event is hard to describe, it's something you have to experience to fully

A portrait of Dawn Christensen, a woman with shoulder-length wavy blonde hair, smiling at the camera. She is wearing a dark top and a necklace with small beads. The background is a plain, light grey.

Dawn Christensen Plans Women's Leadership Conference at MGM Grand

understand how impactful Women's Leadership Conference is on people's lives.

QVegas: What advice would you give to the upwardly mobile Lesbian professionals today?

Dawn: Remember that your name is your brand. When people think of you, what will we they think? So, work hard, keep your word, learn from others and treat everyone with respect. Las Vegas is still a small town in terms of networking, and everyone you meet has the ability to impact your career and your life.

QVegas: Sessions run all day long, are there evening activities or other networking opportunities outside of the conference?

Dawn: We will host a reception for conference attendees Monday evening. It's a great opportunity to network and relax after a full day of workshops and networking. We also leave free-time so our attendees have flexibility to make their own plans with other attendees, especially those from out of town who want to experience Las Vegas.

QVegas: What role does social media play at the conference?

Dawn: Social media plays a couple of roles at the conference. It's one way that attendees connect with us and each other before, during and after the conference. But it's also a topic of discussion. Being savvy on social media is a must in today's work environment. At least one workshop will teach attendees how to establish a professional presence on social media, the dos and don'ts, and even how to find a job using social media.

QVegas: Are there recordings of the conference sessions I can view if I can't attend in person?

Dawn: No, but we will be live tweeting throughout the conference! You can join the conversation by following @WLCLV and tweeting with #WLC2016. We'll also be posting updates on Facebook.com/WLCLV

For more information and to register, visit mgmresortsfoundation.org.

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THIS IS HER REVIVAL

by Scott Matt

It is always exciting to see a well-deserving artist skyrocket into superstardom. Selena Gomez has been on such a journey and has taken the world by storm. Her past includes a cameo in *Barney and Friends*, a hit show on Disney, being the lead singer of a pop-rock band (Selena Gomez and the Scene) and now, she has proved that she can shine bright all on her own.

Her music is infectious, her work ethic inspires, and her character is a breath of fresh air. With her ongoing Revival Tour, in support of her recent successful album, *Revival*, fans of Gomez bask in her presence and see the many, many sides to the young showstopper.

Mention of the world tour was made back in October of 2015 with Gomez stating, "This album marks a new and very important chapter in my life. I cannot wait to get on stage and perform this new material." The tour made its fabulous debut in early May in none other than beautiful Las Vegas; it is scheduled to run until just before the end of the year. Gomez will be sharing her music to eager fans throughout North America, Asia, Europe and finish off in Mexico after a stop Down

Under. This is a true world tour that has barely scratched the surface of its long and thrilling life.

For the tour's inaugural performance in Las Vegas, Gomez appointed DNCE and Bea Miller to welcome in the audience and get the party started. Both acts summoned the crowd's energy, setting up Selena for a salivating reaction to her arrival. DNCE even made a stellar performance during their cover of "No Scrubs". Tyler Shaw, Charlie Puth, and Bahari are also opening acts for the tour, during select dates however.

Finally, after much anticipation, Selena Gomez made her arrival. The show began and ended with an incredible amount of energy, where every song performed was greeted with passion from the performers and audience alike. For her

A photograph of Selena Gomez sitting on a bright yellow velvet couch. She is wearing a purple and pink floral patterned dress and is looking off to the side with a soft expression. The background is a solid teal color.

Selena Gomez Embarks on Her Revival World Tour

entrance, Gomez performed behind a curtain with her silhouette projected onto it as the title-track “Revival” played. Hearing her voice resonate throughout the Mandalay Bay Events Center caused every heart in the arena to beat uncontrollably. After the curtain dropped, shouts of joy rang out.

Throughout the night, Gomez celebrated her current (and addictive) music as well as her past hits. The set designs were ever-changing, paying special attention to each song performed. One of the standout elements of the night would be her spell-binding interludes. Some of these visuals have been directed and edited by Mark Kanemura and feature Gomez in either dripping glitter, editorial fashion, or covered in rose petals.

During crowd favorite, “Same Old Love”, Gomez and her dancers exuded a sexy masquerade sequence with fierce choreography to go with it. A segment honoring Gomez’s Hispanic routes had the crowd in awe while Spanish guitars aided in the performance of “Me and the Rhythm” and “Body Heat”. Gomez took us on a blast to the past as she performed new renditions of “Love You like a Love Song” and “Come and Get It”. The entire show brought together a lighthearted innocence with a high-fashion perspective, exhibiting Gomez’s growth and maturity.

Regardless of each attendant’s age or role at her show, every guest stood, danced, and cheered all the while gazing at the youthful songstress who

manages to command a nearly sold-out show. Her gratitude is apparent as she pours her heart out onto the stage. This is a well-crafted tour that is radiating with fun, artistry, and intimacy with such a superstar. Selena Gomez truly appears to be revived and ready to give it her all.



ROAD TRIP

FLAGSTAFF

[by Russ White]

When my boyfriend invited me to go on a road trip with him to his disc golf tournament, of course I said “yes.” It would be our first time on the road together, and I wanted to support him at the tournament. The last time I was in Flagstaff was many years ago when I moved from Oklahoma to California. My car broke down, so it wasn’t the best visit, but certainly a memorable one.

We started planning the trip and quickly discovered that hotels that weekend were a bit pricey and limited. So, upon recommendation and a little research, we booked our first Airbnb experience at half the cost of a hotel. We packed up my little Fiat and hit the road early Friday afternoon. The Fiat gets excellent gas mileage so we made it there on a single tank!

We pulled in to Flagstaff around 6pm, texting Jim and Jackie, our



*Jim & Jackie's
Airbnb*

*Findlay Fiat
Fiat 500 Abarth*



Airbnb hosts, to let them know we were getting close. They were still home when we arrived, so we got to spend a few minutes with them while they showed us our room, bathroom, and where we could find self-serve breakfast items in the morning.

Jim and Jackie knew we were in town for the tournament and also informed us that... Surprise! Flagstaff Gay Pride was that weekend, which explained the hotel rate hikes.

Hungry after the 3.5 hour drive from Las Vegas, we set out to find a place to eat. We spotted several cute places on the drive through town and backtracked to Josephine's American Bistro.

We could not have picked a better place. The wait staff promptly seated us on the comfortably-cool outdoor patio. Coming from the blistering 115° heat of Vegas, the cool breeze was icing on the cake and added to a romantic setting as the sun began to sink below the horizon.

The Burrata Caprese appetizer arrived even before our Moscow Mule and Old Fashioned cocktail. Burrata had been making the rounds at Vegas

restaurants the past year and has become one of my favorite soft cheeses. It has the flavor of a mozzarella, but a very wet and soft consistency.

Our waiter made several recommendations from the menu. We decided on the Sea Bass with Spanish rice and the Bacon Wrapped Filet and smoked gouda mashed potatoes for our entrees; we couldn't resist the crab cakes, so we added a second appetizer to share.

Though all the desserts sounded amazing, the second appetizer plus the entrees were filling, so we ended the meal satisfied, but tired from the drive and headed back to the house.

Saturday morning we headed up the mountain to Arizona Snowbowl. If you're not familiar with disc golf, it is a sport that scores like ball golf but plays with discs (aka. frisbees) and chain-baskets. Modern disc golf is a professional sport that has been around since the 1960s. Many municipal parks have courses for anyone to play and the cost to start: a couple



*Josephine's
American Bistro*





of \$12 discs (driver and putter) and a desire to explore the outdoors and meet interesting people from all over the world.

The green trees covering the Arizona mountain tops were a striking contrast to the raw rocks we are used to in Nevada. Temperatures fluctuated throughout the day as the climate shifted. As the Amateur players finished their round, a light rain began to fall and released the refreshing smell of the forest-capped mountains.

With plenty of time left in the day, we decided to head down the mountain and attend the Flagstaff Pride event. Pride occupied one of the

local ballparks in downtown Flagstaff. While a much smaller Pride, the spirit of the community was apparent. A few dozen booths, and a few food and drink vendors surround the periphery of the main stage. As we arrived, Crystal Waters is already mid performance so we found our cocktails and explored.

The rain earlier in the day seemed to have washed away a few of the vendors, but the crowd was nowhere close to leaving. Crystal ignited the crowd, but everyone was sticking around for the closing headliner... Just as dusk settled over the festivities, Pop Diva Belinda Carslile, lead singer for hit 80's girl band The GoGo's took the stage.



Arizona
Snowbowl

Living in Las Vegas, I've been fortunate to see so many performers, but Belinda was still on the bucket list and her performance did not disappoint—leading with several of her hit singles, and closing the night with the expected GoGo covers.

The festival ended around 8:30 pm and the crowd disbursed, heading downtown for post-festival activities. There didn't appear to be any gay bars/gayborhoods in Flagstaff. Instead, downtown seemed to be very inclusive of all. We stopped for dinner at Monsoons, a Chinese restaurant that turns nightclub when the kitchen closes. I googled events for the evening and discovered that Shangela (QVegas cover model of May 2016 issue) was performing at Collins down the street. I texted her to find out what time she was performing, hoping it wasn't too late as we had an early morning. Unlike Vegas, drag shows apparently start early and on time, as we had just missed her show.

Sunday morning we said farewell to our very hospitable Airbnb hosts and headed back up to Snowbowl for the final round of the tournament. After another beautiful day



*Pop Diva Belinda Carslile
headlined Flagstaff Pride*



of disc golf we packed up the car and headed down the mountain. We returned to downtown for a quick bite on our way out of town. Flagstaff has so many cute shops and restaurants downtown, and unable to see them all we look forward to our return visit. After a couple of blood-orange mimosas we reluctantly began our trip back to the 115* degree desert we call home.

Our first road trip as a couple was a success. We survived the drive, enjoyed a full weekend of activities, and can't wait to plan our next trip together.



A few musical artists are able to constantly reinvent themselves whilst maintaining a steady fan base. Among the short list of talented performers is Barbados native Robyn Fenty, better known as Rihanna. Throughout the past decade, Rihanna has shown the world her many colors through her music, fashion, and artistry. Fans of hers have enjoyed a journey of experimentation and celebration and her ongoing Anti World Tour stands as the pinnacle of her voyage.

Back in November of 2015, the tour had been announced along with the mention of a \$25 million partnership with Samsung to both promote Samsung's Galaxy line of products and sponsor the release of the new album (Anti) and tour. The tour officially began in March of this year and is scheduled to run until the end of November, spreading its frenzy to the UK, Europe, and even Abu Dhabi. Throughout the run, various opening acts have been selected to take part. Travis Scott and Big Sean are some of the artists chosen as openers on select dates.

Originally, Rihanna had been scheduled to bring her show to Las Vegas for one evening. However due to popular demand, a second Vegas

stop was added to the North American leg of the tour, both being at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. On both nights, Travis Scott was given the stage to break the ice and not only did he break it, he crushed it. As eager concert-goers herded to their seats, Scott put on a spectacle of fog, flashing lights, and next-level energy. His stage included a DJ booth, desert elements, and a giant two-faced replica of himself. The hip hop artist traveled across the stage and even joined the crowd as he performed his top tracks including "Antidote" and "3500".

After a short break following Scott's performance, the lights went down and the screams went sky-high. It was time for Rihanna.

Photos: Kevin Mazur

Rihanna Puts in Overtime during Her Anti World Tour

A spotlight shone upon a cubic stage set in the middle of the arena; a cloaked Rihanna slowly made her way up to the top of the stage while she began to perform “Stay”, with vocals on point I might add. Tiny beams of light sparked across the crowd as cell phones were held high to embrace the moment.

The quality of the production became apparent when a suspended, transparent runway hovered towards Rihanna, transporting her to the main stage. All the while, fans below gained a perfect view of the artist from below as she gyrated her way through the music. Current hits like “Work”, “Desperado”, and “Needed Me” were performed as well as her chart-topping classics like “Umbrella” and “Man Down”. The show maintained the perfect balance between a little nostalgia, and a little of something new. The fashion was simplistic but effective and incorporated unpredictable silhouettes and tones that only Rihanna can pull off.

From start-to-finish, Rihanna’s performance never faltered all thanks to her endurance, elaborate dancers, talented musicians, and crew members. The set design on the main stage has to be one of the most brilliant designs in touring history due to its transformative ability.



Though minimal but strong, the stage is equipped with a high entertainment value. Fog, lasers, dancing lights, and foam are all part of the night and each element presents a revived excitement to the crowd. Towards the end of the festive night, Rihanna manages to share an intimate moment with the audience saying, “It really depends on who comes to the party, and who the party is”, alluding to her gratitude for the crowd’s presence. Thankfully, we are all invited to her wonderful traveling party.

Rihanna’s evolution as an artist has most definitely aided in her ability to perform. Her vision and performance quality for the show keeps us all on our toes and feeds our intrigue. It is advised that you enter into this realm expecting the unexpected. No expression is too strange, no emotion left unattended. If there is anything “anti” about this tour, it is anti-ordinary.

This is what you came for! Enter now for your chance to see Calvin Harris LIVE in Las Vegas PLUS a copy of his smash single “This Is What You Came For” feat. Rihanna! Visit gay.vegas/calvinharris for complete details and to enter.

NOTES ON THE MEAT GRINDR



[by Christopher T. Conner, PhD.]

A central question that many of my gay friends and I talk about is why people behave “like idiots” on Grindr. Like most gay men my relationship with the app is a complex one. I am caught between Grindr’s promise to connect me to other gay folks—yet disgusted by its ability to bring out the worst in us (myself included). Arguably, outside of the Supreme Court ruling on marriage, no other development has had a more profound impact on gay culture than Grindr.

Success of the app has even made it the gold standard for other dating apps. Some individuals have even claimed that Grindr heralds a new “post-gay era” (see *There Goes the Gayborhood*). No matter one’s position on Grindr its impact is profound.

Sociologist Erving Goffman, in his work *The Presentation of Self: In Everyday Life*, characterized social life as a series of performances where individuals try to convince others (the audience) of the role they are playing. One of Goffman’s insights was that we change our behavior based on feedback from our “audience.” More recently researchers, such as

Professors Simon Gottchalk (UNLV) and Jennifer Whitmer (California State, Stanislaus) have applied Goffman’s work to social media. They find that social media platforms, like Grindr, can be understood as another forum in which the self is performed. They also note, that unlike offline modes of communication, social media platforms exaggerate this whole process. Thus, Grindr shapes us into the stereotypical gay “tribe” (twink, bear, otter, etc.) of our choosing, yet these “tribes” are themselves shaped by the offline interactions, advertisements, and other media that create them. The result is often an exaggerated performance where we try to present ourselves as caricatures of ourselves (often in hyper-sexualized, extremely

masculine ways).

Grindr, like the gay bar and baths before it, emerged as a way for gay men to connect with others and to find relief, however momentary, from a hostile outside world. Offline gay institutions provided a space for relationships to emerge over time, compared to the fleeting quick conversations Grindr is engineered to produce (Jamie Woo's work *Meet Grindr*, published in 2012 explores this argument further). More importantly, these ongoing relations provided the validation, which for some scholars is the most important feature of community. However on Grindr validation comes from superficial traits based on one's image and is measured in terms of how many messages one gets, whether they had a "date" with someone, or even compliments from others on their looks. While traditional gay institutions have always had a degree of this superficiality, Grindr takes this to a new level.

As Grindr reduces us to our profiles the lack of rules where no one is held responsible for their actions of behaviors also promotes racist, ageist, and hyper-masculine behavior. One need look no further than "douchebagsofgrindr.com" for examples. These behaviors are not new, but they are pre-existing problems within the gay community. As a social movement, such divisions prevent us from making real progress towards the inequalities which threaten us all (the LGBT pay gap, work place discrimination, continued violence, and high rates of homelessness).

Thus, the kind of post-gay world ushered in by Grindr is one which ethnic minorities, those with a few extra pounds, or older gay men are excluded. Such behavior is the kind made possible by the atomization of community in favor of individualism. Validation, which as gays we have spent most of our lives seeking (and a major component of the fight for marriage equality), is trivialized by an app which claims to connect us

but in the end only divides us. While these new technologies contain endless possibilities for change, the utilization for such a purpose remains to be seen here in the United States.

Grindr also is a threat to LGBT+ culture in two very specific ways. First, by allowing "us" to connect anywhere, it has rendered us invisible. Many individuals whom I have interviewed equate logging into Grindr with participating in LGBT+ community. The net effect of which is that they remain partially closeted. One 23 year old male I recently spoke with had never been to a Pride festival, even though he was out to friends and family since age 18 and has an older gay brother. In his own words:

I had no idea Pride could be so much fun. I always thought going to gay bars was about getting black out drunk and hooking up. I never thought about going out as being more than that. I also never thought about knowing gay folks outside of my hookups.

It is comments like these which sadden me as it is some of the first indications of a generational gap emerging that lacks the political reflexivity and awareness of the struggle in the LGBT+ community. At the same time these individuals also appear less integrated and are seem less likely to have long term relationships. Thus, Grindr stalls the coming out process and detours us from living fully empowered and open lives.

Finally, in the wake of Orlando's tragedy it is more important than ever to remember the importance of our visibility in continuing our fight for equality. We need to put down our phones, go out, be social, meet new people, and allow ourselves to experience the things in life which make it worth living. While there is nothing wrong with hooking up, when that is all you go out for you miss out on the range of experiences made possible by the suffering of earlier generations of the LGBT+ movement.

As Grindr reduces us to our profiles the lack of rules where no one is held responsible for their actions of behaviors also promotes racist, ageist, and hyper-masculine behavior.



KRISTINE W IS OUT THERE

Las Vegas' Hometown Diva
Returns To The Dance floor

[by Casey Arasa]

Just in time for the summer season, Kristine W returns with the debut single from her soon-to-be released album, “Out There”.

At its core, “Out There” is a lush, theatrical ballad that provides the perfect platform for the diva’s powerful vocals. The song’s main message is to appreciate life as a journey and to never give up as the thing you most desire is likely closer than you think.

“Sometimes you have to walk away from all you’ve known and have faith that you will end up exactly where you belong,” advises Kristine W.

To ensure to the song plays across all the world’s varying dance floors, her label has enlisted a global team of producers that includes Moto Blanco, DJ Kespa, Loop Soop/Frank Lords, and Giuseppe D to flavor the track with their personal styles of house beats and EDM. “Out There” and its remixes are available on iTunes now.

“When I first sat down to write the album, I reflected on how ‘out there’ can mean so many different things to different people,” reflects Kristine from her Las Vegas ranch. “All around

me, people were saying things like ‘I’ve gotta get this project out there’, ‘I know the love of my life is out there’, ‘My life’s true purpose is out there’. It got me to thinking how so many of us are searching for what’s out there and putting ourselves out there in many ways.”

It’s been four years since the release of *New & Number Ones*, Kristine W’s explosive 13-track studio album that included re-edited versions of six of her classic songs. “Everything That I Got”, the first single from the album, reached #4 on Billboard’s dance chart. The second release, “So Close To Me”, topped off at #2 and the 2014 remake of “Love Come Home”, the album’s third release” climbed to #4.

The leukemia survivor (she celebrates 13 years in remission this year) actually counts surviving today’s music industry as her biggest feat in life. While others cowered in the melt down of the digital revolution, Kristine launched her own

Photo: Mike Ruiz



music label and publishing company, producing her own songs and videos.

“Staying relevant as an artist has been a challenge,” she continues. “It’s important to keep up with other musicians out there sharing and creating today’s latest grooves. I’ve literally circled the planet to establish connections with the next generation of music makers and producers, many who I am lucky to have featured on the new album. Frankly, it has been a lot of work,” she laughs, “but I believe when fans hear it, they will agree its been worth it.”

Kristine W hails from Pasco, Washington. After winning titles as Miss Tri-Cities and Miss Washington and placing first in the talent competition at the Miss America pageant, she went on to pursue her educational and musical dreams in Las Vegas. There, she found success headlining her own show at the Las Vegas Hilton, winning several ‘Las Vegas Entertainer of the Year’ awards and being officially sanctioned as the entertainer who performed more live shows at the Las Vegas Hilton than any other performer in its history, including Elvis. The award led to June 28th being officially sanctioned Kristine W day in the state of Nevada.

She began recording pop and dance tracks in 1994. Her first track, “Feel What You Want”



reached #1 and since then, Kristine W has had a steady flow of chart toppers. With 16 #1s to date, she ties Jennifer Lopez in the #7 position of artists with the most #1 Billboard Dance songs. She also holds the world’s record for Most Consecutive #1 Billboard Club Hits. She’s had nine, surpassing Madonna and Janet Jackson’s previously shared record of seven. Billboard even named Kristine W “Dance Music Artist of the Decade”.

“We are all forced to be survivors in today’s tumultuous world,” she says. “Its everyone’s responsibility to get out there and fight their way through this journey. I hope my music helps fans on their path.”

For more information on Kristine W and her music, visit <http://kristinew.com>. Kristine W is on Facebook @ KristineWMusic.



M eet Chloe Crawford, she has been a movement artist for over 20 years and in magic for the past 10. We had the chance to catch up with Chloe to get to know her better, how she became so successful as a woman in magic, and to get her feelings towards the LGBTQ community. But before we get into all of that, let's get to know her first.

Chloe has skyrocketed to the top of her industry, performing her original magic on Britain's Got Talent, as a model in the pages of Sports Illustrated and Playboy, and through live performances in Las Vegas, Hollywood, and the UK. Criss Angel, the most influential and copied magician of the modern era, has announced the signing of this British bombshell, magician and dancer and now Chloe will be his new co-star in the new Las Vegas production MINDFREAK® LIVE!

This show is something that we encourage all of our readers to go see because the true message of magic is that anything is possible. In a world where we never know what's going to happen next, it is sometimes good to see a show that

takes us to a place of wonder and mystery and happiness. The ability for performers to take us to a world of imagination and dream of a place that has no limits, is truly the reason why we go, isn't it?

We asked Chloe how she thought magic and entertaining helps people get through tough times, and how she overcomes obstacles? She states "Entertaining is what I love to do more than anything and it gives me the opportunity to escape reality. I face all obstacles head on, one at a time. I've learnt that sometimes all you need is a little patience and time to let the dust settle, then you can look at your problems in a different light and find the best solution for your own happiness." Great advice for everyone.



QVegas: We want to know why it's important to do what you love even if it's not the most traditional path and how do you not give up?

Chloe replies, "That is exactly why I love doing what I do, because I want to show that women are powerful and intelligent and are capable of doing anything a man can do—many times, even better. It's time to change the course of magic history!"

QVegas: Is there anything else our readers should know about you, the show and your involvement in the community?

Chloe: MINDFREAK LIVE! is not only a revolutionary new show but also a production designed to benefit pediatric cancer. This show raises funds and awareness for cancer treatment and research in hopes of one day finding a cure. I'm very excited to be part of a show that allows the public to escape reality by offering the most thrilling magic experience of a lifetime. It really is a dream come true.

QVegas: What would you want to say to our community right now, regarding the Orlando shooting?

Chloe: My heart goes out to all those victim's families and their loved ones. It is tragic that hatred and violence have become such an epidemic. We must all come together and change this once and for all. It was inspiring to see the entire Orlando community unite as one and send a message to the entire world that love always

conquers hate—even in the face of adversity.

We must continue to support the arts, the performers, the shows that really feel us. Laughter and entertainment connect us, allow us to explore parts of ourselves that we may have never known. Isn't that what life is all about? LIVING and never allowing someone to take us over with fear.

MINDFREAK® LIVE! will perform Wednesday through Sunday at 7:00pm and 9:30pm. Tickets start at \$59.



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ENOUGH.

[by Russ White]



I remember waking up on June 12. It was a lazy Sunday morning in bed with nothing to do until Ribbon of Life that afternoon. I grabbed the phone off the bedside table and started scrolling through Facebook updates. “Great. Another shooting,” I thought to myself as the blurred headlines started to scroll by.

But as my eyes came into focus and the stories kept updating, the magnitude of what had happened just a few hours ago started to settle in. The body count kept climbing with each news update.

That afternoon in Las Vegas, hundreds of the local LGBTQ community, along with many allies, converged for the 30th Ribbon of Life, an annual fundraiser for Golden Rainbow, an organization that provides housing assistance for HIV/AIDS patients.

As the community came together, Orlando was on everyone’s mind, along with a silent unspoken fear that we were assembling in a confined space—a corralled target for anyone wanting to bestow hate and ammunition on us.

We would come to find out later that a man in Los Angeles was apprehended on his way to LA Pride.

Las Vegas Metro police officers were standing outside the theater entrance, a sight that offered some comfort. That afternoon and evening, officers had a visible presence at The Center’s vigil and at several gay bars around town.

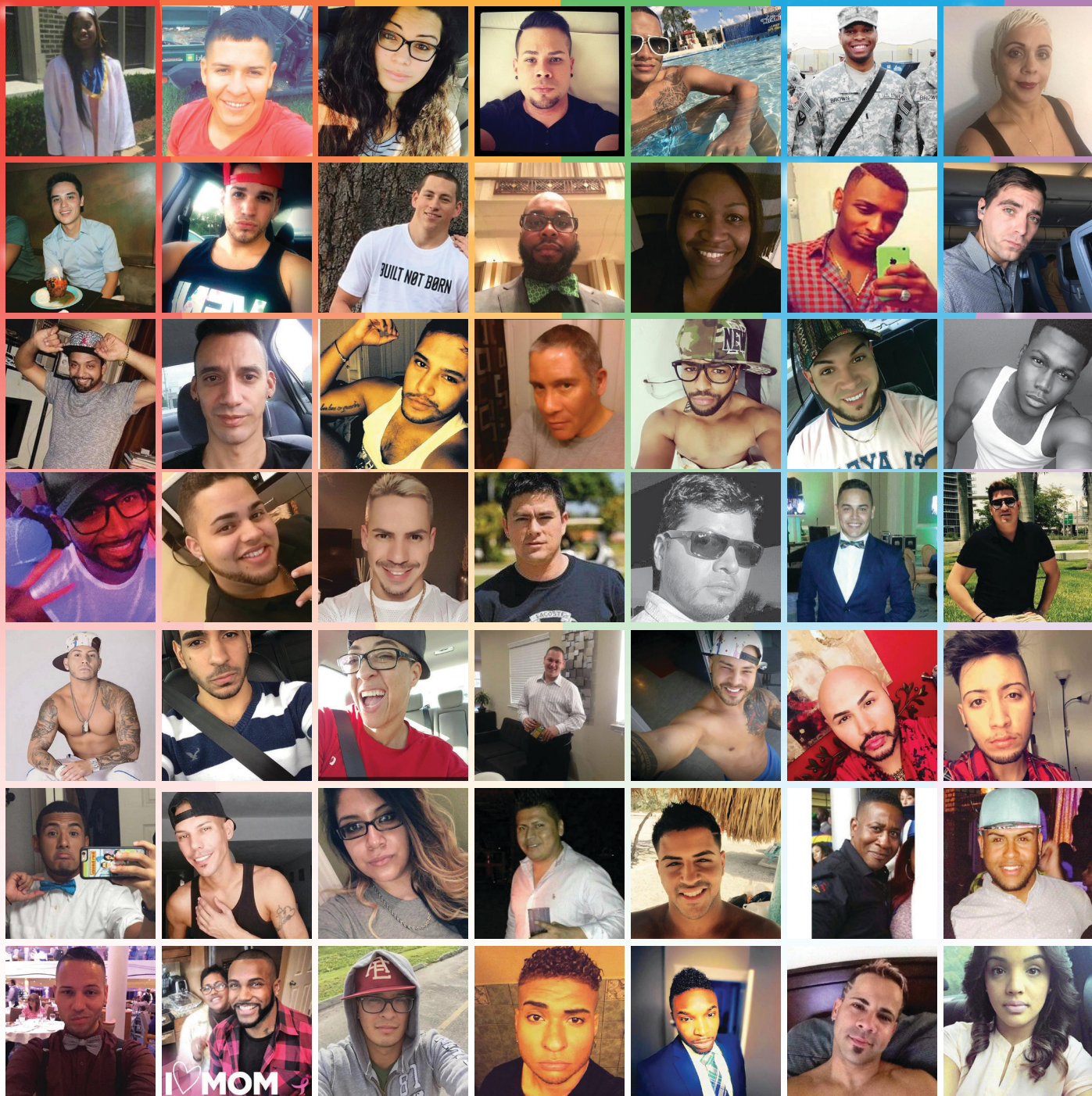
As days passed, stories of the victims came to light. Communities all over the country held prayer vigils and fundraisers.

President Obama and Vice President Biden visited Orlando that week to pay respect to the victims and their families.

In our weekly phone call with other LGBTQ publications around the country, we were informed by Hot Spots Magazine’s (the LGBTQ publication serving Southern Florida) publisher Peter Clark, that the LGBTQ community center in Orlando was in desperate need of additional support, having run out of funds earlier in the year during a remodel that was abandoned by a contractor. Already overwhelmed, the community center anticipates long term needs to support the community.

Pulse Nightclub has established two funds, one to support the needs of victims families and one to assist employees with lost wages as a result of the club closing. Pulse has not stated if or when they will re-open.

In the wake of the tragedy in Orlando, the worst mass shooting in the US, Human Rights Campaign has stepped forward to endorse gun



violence prevention measures.

As we considered how QVegas would respond, we looked to social media and saw anger, fear, sadness, and defiance as common threads. Our response was simple... dedicate this issue to Orlando from the voices of our community.

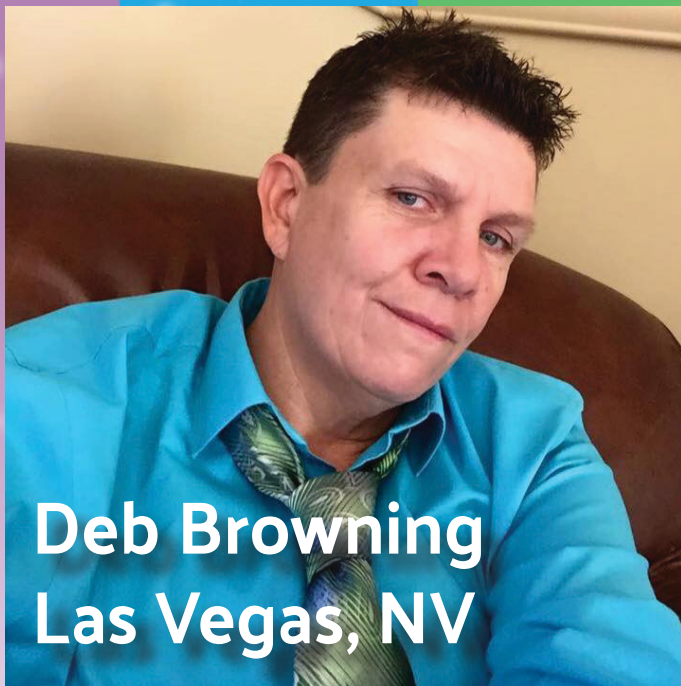
Though we have made great strides in equality, those strides are still not enough. Our lawmakers

are not doing enough.

We asked friends, allies, and readers to share their voices.

What follows are the voices of a community that have had enough. Enough hate. Enough violence. Enough discrimination.

Enough.



Deb Browning
Las Vegas, NV

Sunday Morning

The morning of June 12, 2016 I awoke, and started my normal routine. Grabbed my coffee, of course, and logged into Facebook. The very first thing I saw when I logged on is the message from Pulse Nightclub stating, “Everyone get out of Pulse and keep running.” Immediately, I started searching what was going on, and then saw about the shootings. I turned on CNN, my heart just sank. While listening to the constant updates, I was feverishly searching to see if any of my friends in Orlando had updated their statuses, just making sure all were ok. I turned into a total news junkie the rest of the day. Not moving from my recliner, I just kept listening to the same story over and over. I sat there; numb, thinking “what if this was me”? What if I was targeted and killed because of who I love? Then it really hit home. This was me; this was my family; my brothers and sisters. That I was targeted, because of who I was, and who I loved. The difference, I wasn’t shot; I survived.

Being someone who has been “gay bashed” not just verbally, but also physically, it opened up a lot of deep wounds for me. In my years being up on stage and speaking about equal rights; they weren’t always easy. For years, I had to have a

police escort in our venues, as we celebrated our Pride, because of death threats. So, to this day, over 2 weeks after the shooting, I am still numb. I have yet to wrap my head around this heinous act. Have I cried over this tragedy? Yes. I have thought, for countless hours, trying to figure out why this happened. Why would someone come into our “safe zone” and want to inflict so much hatred, and harm to another human? These questions may never be answered. But to this day, I keep reading the news updates, and wondering why, just why anyone would want to kill another person, because of who they love.

Now, in my opinion, we live in a hypocritical society. We live in a judgmental world, and even a judgmental community. If people do not believe, say, do, look, LOVE, etc a specific way, there is always someone to say something negative about it. Unfortunately, our first amendment rights are skewed. Our rights are, in my opinion, are that you do have a voice, as long as it is the same voice that everyone else has, and if it is a voice that the majority agrees with. Not everyone should have the same ideals, and not everyone should love the same. But, in reality, our love is the same.



THE ORLANDO ISSUE

July 2016

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Every person in this world is unique, so what if we don't have the same color skin, wear the same brand name of clothing, and who really cares if your favorite drag queen's toes hang over her heels? Who are we to judge because someone is different?

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

~ Marianne Williamson

You are never inadequate, don't be afraid, you are fabulous, you are not small, nor insecure, liberate yourself, love who you want, be heard, stand up, and JUST BE YOU!

Deb Browning is just someone who is as equal as everyone else.





Rev. Greg Davis
Las Vegas, NV

Only Love Can Win

The first time was April 19, 1995. I was performing in *Forever Plaid* at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Out of the blue, early one morning, my high school choral director called my apartment and told me to turn on the television, there was something I needed to see. To my horror, I saw live reports from my hometown, Oklahoma City, where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building had just exploded. At that early time, no one knew exactly what had happened. Was it an internal explosion in the structure of the building? Was it related to a gas leak? No one knew. The one thing we did know was that half of this structure was gone, including a nursery full of small children. There were many dead, countless injured. It would be the disaster that would define Oklahoma through this day. And the question rang out ... “Where was God?”

The second time, I was asleep with my husband, it was early in the morning before coffee had been consumed. The phone rang ... this time it was my mother. “Greg, turn on the television.” It was September 11, 2001. Two of our most famous structures seem to have erupted in flames. Again, we did not know what exactly had happened. Was it an explosion? A bomb? What we did know was

that there were many dead and countless injured. This would be the disaster that would define our country even through this day. And the question rang out ... “Where was God?”

The third time. It was very early on a Sunday morning. I was up about 4:30 a.m. drinking copious amounts of coffee, a Sunday morning ritual, getting the blood flowing for another Sunday ... another Sermon ... another day to hopefully make a small difference in the lives of my congregation. Freddie came out on the patio, Greg, you have to come see what is on the T.V. It was June 12, 2016. Earlier that morning, we learned, someone had opened fire on a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. We still were not sure what exactly had happened. Was it one person or a group? What we did know was that there were many dead and countless injured. I wonder, will this be the disaster that will define us as a community? And the question rings out, even today. “Where was God?”

It is a huge question. The interesting thing about his question is that it is asked by believers as well as non-believers. Where was God on June 12, 2016. In Orlando? at PULSE?

Faithful people of many different faiths still ask this question. Our understandings of the Divine, which are all over the map, had been rocked yet again. God is Love! God is all powerful! Couldn't God have stopped this if he/she had wanted to?

Those who don't follow any particular faith, or reject faith in any form ask the same question? So ... Where was God? I sense that many were doing so to add fuel to their argument that God doesn't exist or that a higher power is useless when talking about tragedy.

The funny thing? ... I hear all sides and I get it. I get the sense of disbelief. I understand the anger that accompanies the seeming absence of God. These are natural questions when trying to make sense of needless violence and destruction of sacred human life. And as a clergy person, as a gay clergy person this past week, I have been in that same state ... and I am mad as hell. Why God? Why did this happen? Why didn't you do something to stop it? All questions that will never

be answered or understood.

So how do we find resolve? How do we find peace? How do we move forward? How do we find joy in life again?

As a child, growing up in Oklahoma, tornadoes were a regular occurrence. Every spring our family would go through tornado drills,, most of the time on the fly in the middle of the night. We would hear the sirens while we were sleeping. My father would gather my sister and I and put us in the bathtub and place a twin mattress over us for protection. As usual and normal as this drill could become during certain seasons, it was something I never got used to. Most of the time, the storm would pass without incident. Other times, we would quickly hear of a friend or family member who had experienced home damage. I would ask my Daddy, “Why do tornadoes happen every year ... Is God mad at Oklahoma?”

“Greg,” he would say, “You know how we talk about creation, that God created everything?” “Yes, Daddy” I would reply. “Well ... God sent hot air blowing in this direction and cold air in that direction and sometimes, they pass on top of each other, and that is what makes a tornado. God doesn’t control the wind, God just set it all in motion.” My daddy was great at making my confusion and fear disappear.

Today, my father is passed, and I find myself saying to my heavenly parent, “God, were you mad at Orlando?” “Are you mad at gay people?” “Why didn’t you stop the shooting!” Where were you?” I don’t claim to hear from God directly, in fact I never have had that kind of experience. But what I do sense is this. The shooting at PULSE was not a natural tragedy like a tornado. There is no preparation drill for this manifestation of evil. However, just like a tornado, I do not believe that God had any control over it. So, call me a heretic, but if God intervened in circumstances like the Orlando shooting, then I would have a hard time believing or having faith.. This kind of God would make random decisions about when and on whom violence and tragedy will fall. This is not a God of mercy and grace, but one of pent up vengeance just waiting to let his/her wrath fall.

Instead, my faith lies in God’s continual presence, in the good times and the bad.

I can sense God’s panic at the sounds of gunshots. I imagine God crouched in a corner of a restroom stall seeking to hide from the shooter. I can see a tear falling from God’s eye surveying the devastation, the blood, the carnage, the death of his kids who were just out to celebrate life. This kind of ever present God is one that I can buy into.

So ... where do we go from here? I can honestly say, I don’t know. What I do know is that God, the Divine, the Almighty ... whatever you call God ... that power never leaves. If God is the source of all love then God weeps for us. God weeps with us. Christian scripture reads in Matthew 28:20 ... I am with you until the end of the age.

This tragic event could be what defines our community for years to come. We will look back on June 12th and remember the blood, the death, the hate. But we will also remember the ways we came together. We must remember that God is present with us! May we never get used to the violence like our community experienced through the shooting in Orlando. The presence of love is the power enables us to stand as one with our beloved LGBTQIA community. The Divine’s presence is that power that will one day see us through to not only realizing full equality but also the love that will one day win and all of us will be viewed and embraced as the sacred beings that we are. Until then, I hope and pray that there are no more tragic phone calls ... no more breaking news casts ... no more injuries and no more death. Hate will not win ... only love has that power. Where is God? Where is the Love? We are the Love. St. Theresa of Avila expressed this: (paraphrased) “God has no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet, no face but our face.” Today, I would add, God has no presence in the challenges we face unless we are present. Let’s show up!. May Love change us today.

Rev. Greg Davis is Pastor at Northwest Community Church, United Church of Christ



Rev. Robert Fleming
Las Vegas, NV

Pulse Orlando: Reflection from a Local Pastor

As I have reflected on the tragedy in Orlando, I cannot help but think about how much work there is still left in order to bring about equality. One year ago, we celebrated a major victory in marriage equality. I have celebrated as a former Marine in seeing DADT repealed to allow gays and lesbians to serve in our armed forces. These are reminders of how the walls of injustice are being brought down. Hearing of the murders in Orlando are the events that some would hope would silence the LGBTQIA community and to put a cease to our celebrations.

As the new senior pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Las Vegas, I have had many ask me how do we move forward given such tragedy. First, we remember. We remember these individuals that died while living their full authentic lives. We pray for their families and the community in which they lived. Secondly, we honor them by continuing to live authentically as who we were created to be. We stand up, and we speak out against hatred.

When speaking out, I am not suggesting for us to retaliate with the same vile that has often been shown towards our own community. I have yet to

see how screaming vile and hatred at one another has made any changes. This is not always an easy stance when it is easy to scream back. We show up and speak to our local lawmakers to take a stand for equality for all people. We educate those around us about our lives.

We can begin by sharing our stories and journeys with those around us. We create a space for dialogue in order to learn about one another even in spite of differences. We honor one another as people who are uniquely made and no one person is alike. We refuse to allow a space for hate, but set a boundary that allows for conversation around diversity to which each individual is treated with respect.

I have read many comments on social media about the Orlando shootings and it is upsetting to see the hate spewed. I see this as fear. It is fear for a community that some people do not know. It is fear from believing what someone has taught them to believe about a particular group of people. It has been my experience that social media has made it very easy for society to gather an opinion merely on what is read on various social media outlets and call it truth. What might it be like if we begin doing our own research and experiencing each other's truth rather than just accepting what leaders tell us is "true?"

While I do not claim to have all the answers or any answers, what I do know is that no one will listen if hate continues to be spewed. I have experienced many settings where I was not in agreement with those around me or vice versa. I do know we left the table with respect with one another, and a better understanding of how to work together. My proudest moment was when a religious sister said to me, "By working with you and dialoging with you, I now how to rethink some of the things I have been taught. My experience is not matching what I have been taught."

I hope many people in our community can have mind changing experiences like the one I described. They are not instant and they take time. Together we can bring one another together as human beings.



Phyllis A. James
Las Vegas, NV



Orlando: A Message from MGM Resorts International's Chief Diversity Officer

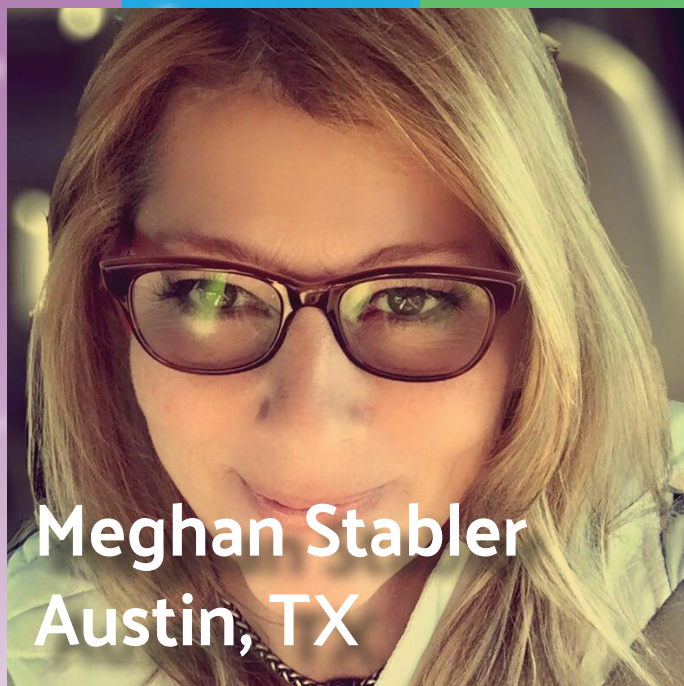
The recent massacre at the Orlando, Florida nightclub was a monstrous crime against humanity – whether motivated by terrorist ideology, or hatred of the LGBT community. Mere words cannot adequately express the depth of the sadness, loss, anger and utter frustration that we feel upon witnessing such a barbaric, senseless act of violence. As President Obama stated, a crime against one American because of his/her sexual orientation, race, color, gender, religion, or other defining characteristic is a crime against every American. At the center of it, we are all human beings. We at MGM Resorts mourn the incredible loss of life, value and contribution that each victim represented to our human family and the Orlando community, and we extend deepest condolences and solidarity to their families, friends and the Orlando community.

This massacre is another grim reminder of the costly human toll taken by the poison of bigotry, intolerance and hatred. It is at the same time a stark lesson in why the values of diversity and

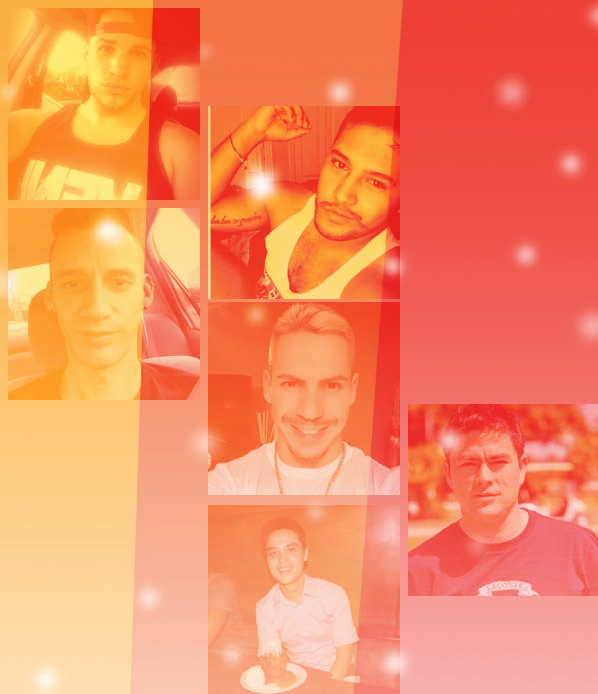
inclusion must be a part of the basic covenant that binds all of humanity. This is fundamentally important to our company, our society and our world, and the survival of human civilization.

Regrettably, we cannot change the past dark deeds of terrorists such as the Orlando shooter, but we have the power, and I would submit, the obligation – individually and collectively – to work as hard and long as we can to practice positive inclusion in our actions and our environment. This is the only way we can succeed in defeating the destructive mindsets, attitudes and voices of bigotry and intolerance. Imagine the conquering power of the good and the positive that we can bring to bear on our community and our society if we all practice positive inclusion as a daily way of life! This is within the grasp and the ability of each and every one of us – regardless of job position or title – each and every day.

Phyllis A. James is Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer for MGM Resorts International.



Meghan Stabler
Austin, TX



We Must Take Action

In this time of profound grief following the devastating attack in Orlando it's time for action and legislation.

We cannot allow the lives of those lost in Orlando to perish from our memories in vain. Now is the time act before we read another headline of senseless mass-killing.

I am a transgender woman and proud member of the LGBTQ community. The Orlando massacre was our greatest fear made real, --that hatred of the LGBTQ community would move from rhetoric to mass violence. If there's a ray of light in these dark days, it's been the strength of the LGBTQ community and global outpouring of support and solidarity. It proves that love and unity will always conquer hate and fear. We've marched together, prayed together, and mourned together. Let's work together to prevent tragedies like this from ever happening again.

I am also a proud, law-abiding and responsible gun owner, I am fully in favor of enacting common-sense gun violence measures. Gun

safety, as I see it, is entirely consistent with our Second Amendment right, and further I believe supporting common sense gun safety legislation allows me to be a good Ambassador for my Second Amendment right, --even as a member of the LGBTQ community. However, the Orlando massacre highlights how vulnerable we are to hate-fueled violence, especially toward LGBTQ communities of color.

Let's start by improving gun safety. We all have a part to play. Contact your legislators to demand passage of both LGBTQ protections with robust hate-crime laws AND common-sense gun violence prevention measures.

It is up to us to keep the names and memories of those lost to gun violence alive. We cannot sit on the sidelines and let tragedies like Orlando, San Bernardino, Newton, or Virginia Tech keep happening. We must take action.

Meghan Stabler is a member of the DNC LGBT Advisory Board and Member of HRC National Board of Directors.



Something Good Can Come From Something Bad

I called my mom today and told her how upset I was after the Orlando mass murder. She tried to comfort me, but she could tell I was a bit frustrated. I told her that I wanted to tell her something. Something important. Something I needed her to hear—really hear.

I told her that Orlando was an attack against LGBT Americans. An attack that was fueled by hatred—and not the kind that some Americans imagine is limited to one particular faith or the other. Instead, I told her, this was institutionalized hatred. The type of hatred that comes from ordinary folks (teachers, preachers, politicians, and authority figures) who don't think there's anything wrong with using their religion and their politics to separate us—the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, the worthy from the unworthy, and the sinners from the saints. I told her that I believe these Americans

are—at least partially—to blame for this and many other acts of barbarism that take place around the world today in the name of God.

I told her that I could not sit back any longer and wonder if my parents were partly to blame for this situation, given what I perceived to be their “conservative values” and their Christian faith. To be clear, my parents have never once treated me, their gay son, in any bad way. I have their total support and have been accepted by them for who I am. No questions asked. My friends and lovers included.

Known affectionately as “The Content Wrangler,” Scott Abel is an internationally recognized global content strategist and intelligent content evangelist who specializes in helping organizations deliver the right content to the right audience, anywhere, anytime, on any device.



Cory Burgess
Las Vegas, NV

Changed Forever

Sunday, June 12, 2016 was not like any other Sunday. When I went to sleep around midnight Saturday, I expected to sleep late that next morning, eat breakfast and then head out for a bit of shopping. Little did I know that at the same time as I was getting comfy in bed, one of the worst tragedies in the LGBTQ community was unfolding across the nation in one of my favorite vacation destinations.

When I woke around 8 a.m., I was promptly informed by my husband about the shooting at Pulse Nightclub, which sent me immediately to social media for more information. I didn't know what to think or feel, except for Oh My God. Minutes later, my boss reached out to request that I promote a vigil set to happen Monday night at a local church. Straight to Twitter and Facebook I went, and as soon as local reporters began retweeting my post, I received updated news that a prayer vigil was being arranged for that very evening at The Center. As director of marketing for the organization, I knew my day would be a busy one, one that I would not soon forget.

In almost no time, I had a graphic prepared for social media and created a Facebook event to

announce the vigil, largely organized by Senator (and Pastor) Pat Spearman. What impressed me is the speed at which word spread throughout our community. Local media were a huge help through their social media and web posts early in the day. As it drew closer to vigil time, I knew this would be no small gathering. This was certainly a night when we needed to be with our LGBTQ family — yet was it “safe” to be assembled in such a manner? Some were not so certain.

That Sunday evening, familiar and new faces came together in droves. The last time such a crowd gathered at The Center, it was to celebrate nationwide marriage equality nearly a year earlier; people were ecstatic, and any tears shed were tears of joy. On June 12, most tears shed were tears of sorrow, yet it didn't seem to be as somber of an occasion as I had expected. It was less of a vigil and more of a rally, with clergy and the politically minded taking to the stage to issue messages of hope and the need for change. Pastor Charlotte Morgan of Indigo Valley Church rallied the crowd to exclaim, “Act up! Show up! Participate! End Hate!”

Nationwide — worldwide, actually — the LGBTQ community and allies have come together in the most amazing ways since 49 people lost their lives in Orlando. Countless thousands have assembled in cities everywhere. Crowdfunding efforts have reached astronomical numbers well over \$10 million collectively. Locally, thousands participated in marches, vigils and fundraisers as the week went on. The widespread effect of one person's overt hatred is simply unbelievable. I'm glad the son-of-a-bitch who caused all this pain will never know the impact he had.

Sunday, June 12, 2016 was not like any other Sunday, and I'm not sure any Sunday — or any other day of the week, for that matter — will ever be the same as those that came before it. We have been forever changed, together. And together we will act up, show up, participate and end hate.

Cory Burgess is the Director of Marketing for The Center and a former editor and creative director of QVegas Magazine.



Rob Schlegal
Las Vegas, NV

“Pray for the dead. Fight like hell for the living.” –Mother Jones

Our community has been attacked and we are all in shock. As we mourn, shed tears for those lost or injured in Orlando, we must double down on our efforts to demand social and legal equality. We cannot be deterred and cannot be intimidated into the shadows.

In 1990, Dr. Rob Eichberg started National Coming Out Day (NCOD) and wrote the book, “Coming Out An Act of Love.” Statistically speaking, the shooter in Orlando must have had several LGBTQ family members. We don’t know that for sure, nor do we know if any of them were out, but we do know that even anti-gay politicians soften their rhetoric when family members come out.

Now it appears that the shooter himself, may have been gay, suffering from internalized homophobia and self-hate. Whether he was or was not “one of us” the lesson is clear that families must teach acceptance of those perceived to be different, whether that difference is sexual

orientation, religious beliefs, ethnicity, abilities or race. If parents love their children, they will teach tolerance and understanding. Then situations such as Orlando or Charleston would not have happened, nor would “radicalization” through social media.

It is with broken hearts that we mourn for those who were brutally killed. We are thankful for those who survived. We laud the law enforcement officers who risked their lives and likely prevented even more deaths. We thank the health care providers who worked non-stop, successfully saving more lives.

We also know this horrific event could have happened here in Las Vegas and any one of us could have been the victims. Even with our tremendous success at the Supreme Court this past year, we have much more work to be done, including the massive work of changing attitudes and gaining more widespread acceptance. An attack against a nightclub in Orlando is an attack against our entire community.

I would like to remind my friends that this hatred doesn’t just happen. It starts with religious intolerance and continues with the vitriol espoused by “respected” political figures. I’m bold enough to name a couple, such as Nevada Assemblyman Ira Hansen and indicted political operative Tony Dane. Also responsible are those who use Dane as a political consultant or accept his money. There are many others, including religious leaders right here in Nevada who still push reparative therapy and legislators who have not outlawed this unethical and discredited practice.

Like Mother Jones said, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living.”

Then don’t forget to donate to the EQUALITY Florida’s Go Fund Me account:

<https://www.gofundme.com/pulsevictimsfund>

Rob is a Las Vegas real estate agent, the treasurer of Lambda Business Association, and the former publisher of The Bugle, the predecessor to QVegas.



Kitty Litter Las Vegas, NV



The Second Amendment and Gay Bars

Saturday June 11th I was in Portland, Oregon with family and friends celebrating my 50th birthday, along with a close friend of 30 years also turning 50. We started talking about the old days when gay bars had the best dance floors, the best DJs, the best sound system, and the best deal on a 8 ball....tee hee.

Monday you stayed home because of Sunday's Tea Dance at Embers nightclub

Two for Tuesday's at Scandals on Stark Street Beer was \$1.25 and Vodka \$1.75

Wednesday was bar crawl, 'cause it was hump day and all bars had drink specials.

Thursday we spent at the Brigg and Box's a \$1.00 for anything on the shelf. You get shit faced and go dancing at City Night Club.

Friday Starkey's was known for a great dinner and cocktails, and Saturday Court Shows at the Embers.

We never once had to worry about Guns in a night club... not once. Our biggest fear in Portland was the cops and walking home or to your car

alone and getting molly whopped. But the 80's was a history changer for the GLBT community be it AIDS or Civil Rights. I can't remember ever having a discussion about the 2nd amendment with any GLBT as a young queer. All I remember about using a gun is (

I am going to shoot that bitch in the head if she does not shut the fuck up.)

Sunday June 12th 10am Rose Gardens (Washington Park) was a beautiful morning. I

I cry every morning driving to work thinking about the 49 who cannot drive to work and 53 wounded souls who will now have that voice in their head.. Asking who wants to kill me because I am different.

wanted to take some pictures. I picked up my phone and started reading the news feed: 20 then 39 and 50 DEAD.....with 53 in hospital from a gunshot wound. Then the sentence (in a Gay Bar in Orlando FL).

I had to sit down ...over and over in my head IN A GAY BARWHY?????? Since I can remember so many of our GLBT community has been hurt or killed from religion which teaches hate... I don't why but I started reading books on the 2nd amendment.

The best indication of what any law, including a Constitutional provision, means, is what the courts say it means. Our federal courts, including the Supreme Court, have spoken plainly and unanimously on the meaning of the Second Amendment. It is astonishing that no-one knows this. Even most books on either side of the issue fail to cover court decisions. The legal meaning of the Second Amendment tends to get lost in the hype. The pro-gun forces especially would like to ignore that there is any contemporary jurisprudence on the topic. Most NRA members probably don't know that the organization always bases its litigation on constitutional grounds such as over breadth and vagueness--It never argues that a gun control law offends the Second Amendment, because it knows that, under the present state of the law, it would lose.

On September 4, the Senate voted to change the language of the Second Amendment by removing the definition of militia, and striking the conscientious objector clause: A well regulated militia, being the best security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Pro-gun forces certainly believe that 20th century Second Amendment jurisprudence

is dead wrong, just as I believe that court decisions upholding the constitutionality of the Communications Act of 1934 are dead wrong. What we are both saying is that the courts, in a given instance, wrote the wrong story. We are entitled to our opinions. The perniciousness of the pro-gun forces, particularly the NRA, is not that they disagree with the courts, but that they lie to their members and to the public about what the law says. The success of the NRA and similar organizations in their disinformation campaign is evident in the fact that so many otherwise reasonable citizens believe that the Second Amendment, despite its reference to the militia, guarantees an individual right to keep and bear arms. No-one knows that the highest federal courts in the land have consistently held that the Second Amendment is only a right held by the states against the federal government.

I am not ready to deal with this... I cry every morning driving to work thinking about the 49 who cannot drive to work and 53 wounded souls who will now have that voice in their head.. Asking who wants to kill me because I am different.

In closing, please do not stop living. Beware what is around you. See something, Say something. Do not let Religion or the Kim Davis' of the world take your freedom who how and where to love.

Love Kitty.....

Drink Vodka and Dance

Kitty has been an active member of the Las Vegas community for many years, including NGRA and SNAPI. Last year, Kitty organized the largest Drag Performance at the Hard Rock Cafe, setting the Guinness Book of World Records.



Antioco Carrillo Las Vegas, NV



Sunday Morning

Nothing we say will ever alleviate the pain, agony and despair felt by the witness, survivors, friends and family members of 49 individuals massacred in Orlando Florida. Nothing will bring them joy, comfort and safety for a long time. This tragedy is so devastating that expressing condolences to survivors doesn't even touch their overwhelming sense of pain and loss, so the more it's said, the more it blends with the background noise. For the survivors, only time, memories and their own grief will bring them a sense of numbed normalcy. A normalcy that is apathetic, indifferent and disengaged with the rest of the world, a normalcy that will last for months, years and, for many, a lifetime. For most of us that didn't know the victims or their family members personally, the pain will dissolve with our daily life and eventually it will be seen as a distant tragic memory as we move on with our lives.

It is now a couple of weeks after the attack and I am still not over it. I am still sad, anxious and unable sleep well. I am still trying to make sense of the atrocity and I can't think of any possible way to rationalize it. One more devastating crime perpetuated to our community. One more

agonizing crime that reminds me how vulnerable we are and how easy it is for a lunatic homophobe to perpetuate horrendous crimes against us - our community.

All of us that are members of the LGBT community know that the problem isn't necessarily terrorism, ISIS and radicalized Muslims. We know that it is homophobia. We know what that looks like and over all we know how it feels. Most of us have felt it before. The problem is endemic and infectious. It exists across the board without regard to race, ethnicity and gender. Despite many battles we have won over the last 50 years advancing equal protection to all of our brothers and sisters or the LGBT community, I still feel that we are alone fighting for our very own survival.

I can't move on believing that things will change. In fact, I don't want to. I am tired of having to justify or defend our right to exist. I am tired of educating people as to why the lives of the LGBT community matter because things won't change. We may have changed the laws that allow us to adopt kids, get married, improve healthcare for people with HIV and provide funding for HIV prevention and care and, at some level feel normal

in society at large, but I still feel pessimistic about how long it will take us to eradicate homophobia.

Incremental changes are important but they won't make much of a difference at this time. The reaction on the part of the elected officials and policy makers to these atrocities has not shown many changes over the years despite of the location and the group affected. I would think that if it happens to children or at church, the reaction would be such that will mobilize policy makers to change laws and regulations so that these massacres wouldn't happen again but it hasn't. It happened to 20 kids at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut in 2012 and nothing changed. It also happened in at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina in 2015 and nothing changed either. It has happened in most settings indiscriminately affecting all of us over the last several years and the only consistent reaction we have made public as a society has been to offer moments of silence, thoughts and prayers. It happened in Orlando Florida where 49 of our brothers and sisters were hunted down by a lunatic armed with better weapons than some police force in a third world country thanks to our thoughts, prayers.

I am tired of having to justify or defend our right to exist. I am tired of educating people as to why the lives of the LGBT community matter because things won't change.

Observing a moment of silence, praying, and telling people that they are in our thoughts are not enough. Changing laws, regulations, getting involved and

becoming more active in the community is the path to follow. Let's not forget that homophobia is still alive and active on a daily basis and that at any given time, any of us can be the next victims. We lost a generation of bright, talented and phenomenal individuals during the AIDS crisis in the 80's and many of our brothers and sisters organized AIDS memorials, The Names Project and AIDS Walks to keep their memory alive and to remember their commitment to our community.

Let's NEVER forget the Orlando massacre. Let's create an annual March, a March that would take place every June, during National Pride Month, all in white as we did it the Monday after the massacre on Las Vegas Boulevard. That should be a new March - a March that will bring awareness about homophobia and violence towards our LGBT brothers and sisters, remember the victims, and examine the laws and regulations that should change so that we don't have to see this atrocities again.

Antioco Carrillo is the Executive Director of Aid for AIDS of Nevada.



Gary Costa
Las Vegas, NV

Orlando and the Las Vegas Entertainment Community

I was awakened early that Sunday morning by our publicist informing me that the media wanted to know if I'd be available to discuss the "terrorist attack". It was barely 5:30 AM and I had only been asleep about 3 hours at that point. It was the morning of our 30th Annual Ribbon of Life and I had been up late working on some last minute changes to the show. Confused and disoriented I immediately grabbed my iPad to check the news sites while she briefly told me what had transpired in Orlando. Our discussion was soon interrupted by another call – this time from Michael Dimengo of The Center. My heart sank as I heard of the loss of life being reported and the fact that it was an attack on the LGBT community.

Before I could even get out of bed I was already on the phone with management of The Tropicana and Las Vegas Metro. We had a large gathering of LGBT patrons arriving later that day at the hotel for the show and we needed to make some decisions. Would we be able to ensure the

safety of over 1,400 guests? There were over 350 performers representing over 50 shows putting the finishing touches on their numbers for the 30th Annual Ribbon of Life at The Tropicana. After weeks of rehearsals the show was ready. But with the developments in Orlando people started asking me if we were going to postpone or perhaps even cancel the show?

To be honest, the thought never crossed our minds. When it became apparent that this was a terrorist act designed to strike fear and chaos in the LGBT community we knew we would not give in. We were NOT going to be silenced. We would NOT live in fear. We were NOT going to stop doing what we do best. The SHOW MUST GO ON!

It all came down to the origins of Golden Rainbow and how we were founded. Back in the '80's and '90's AIDS was devastating the local entertainment community. Many of the shows on the strip were hard hit by the sudden illness and deaths of literally hundreds of performers. One of the shows hardest hit was Jubilee at Bally's. When one of the popular dancers there was diagnosed and sent home to die, his family had no idea what to do. Fear and ignorance was quite pervasive at the time. His family, fearing for their own safety, put him in their garage and let him spend his last few weeks alone and isolated. He eventually died in that garage. When his fellow performers discovered that this is how he spent his final days, they vowed to never let something like this happen to one of their own ever again. They organized a major benefit show to raise money to establish a fund to specifically provide emergency housing for people with AIDS. That first show titled Golden Rainbow featured 133 performers from six different shows. At the time, it was the single largest fundraiser ever held in Las Vegas that directly benefitted the LGBT community. It was perhaps one of the first times that talking openly about gay men and lesbians had ever happened on the Las Vegas stage – that wasn't a punchline to some homophobic joke or that involved a stereotypical flamboyant gay character used for a cheap laugh.

The show was a success and 30 years later we still present the “Ribbon of Life” as an annual fundraiser. And I am pleased to announce that the show this year was a critical and financial success. To date, the Ribbon of Life shows have raised over 7 million dollars for services here in Las Vegas and for that the entertainment community should all be very proud.

When I first came to Vegas in 1980, I remember the first show I went to see was Boylesque with Kenny Kerr at The Silver Slipper. Being a young gay boy just coming out I was mesmerized by the costumes and the freedom and the pure joy of the show. That show had a lasting impact on my impression of Las Vegas.

Years later I would get to know Kenny. He shared stories of the struggles he had doing a show like that in Las Vegas. The homophobia. The death threats. The backlash from fellow members of the entertainment community. It wasn't until the AIDS epidemic started devastating the casts of the various shows on the strip before Kenny found a new voice and a new purpose. He like many other performers on the strip at the time knew that we couldn't be silent any longer. If we were going to stop AIDS from killing us all, we had to make ourselves visible. We were in a war against a disease and against a public in fear. We could have just stayed silent and done nothing. But instead, the entertainment community mobilized and rose up. We made our voices heard.

Now I know that the track record for positive LGBT visibility here on the Las Vegas strip is spotty to say the least. While many of us can live openly gay, lesbian or trans lives without repercussions, there are countless others who still do not have that level of freedom in their workplace. Some of us still risk losing our jobs just because of who we chose to love.

The past couple of years we've seen the great progress the LGBT community has made for equality across the nation.

And here in Vegas we now see shows with openly gay headliners, dancers and performers.

Our list of freedoms are growing. But we must do more.

Just like with the AIDS epidemic in the 80's, our freedom and way of life came under attack. This time by a deranged individual with a weapon designed for war. We were attacked in a place many of us can relate to. A dance club where we are free to be ourselves.

Many performers who work the major shows on the strip earn extra money on the side by dancing at night in one of the many local LGBT nightclubs. This act of terror in Orlando happened in a place that most of us consider to be a place of safety and escape and for some a place of employment.

The Las Vegas Entertainment Community has shown the world that we can rise to the occasion when necessary. We did it when AIDS attacked us in the 80's. We took the anger and the fear and turned it into action.

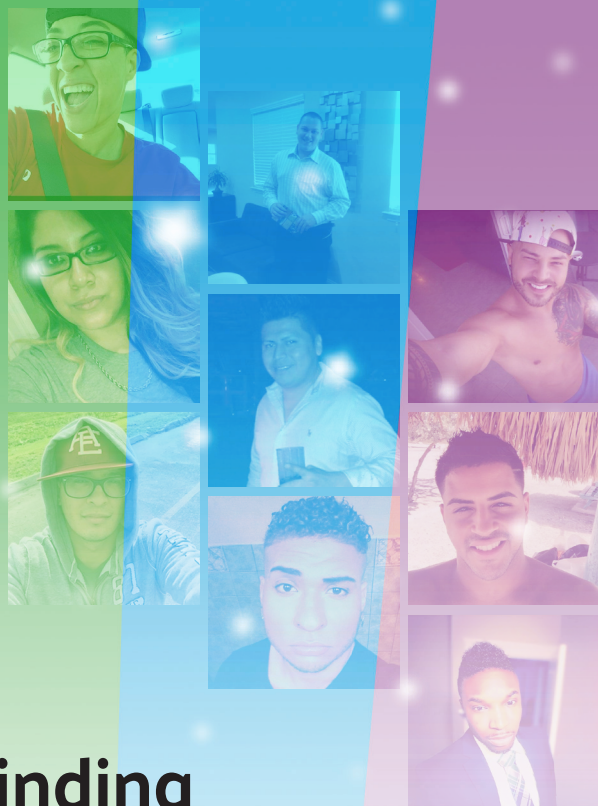
We must now use that same sense of urgency to combat homophobia and this senseless attack on our way of life. Orlando was not an isolated event. It was merely a culmination of years of bullying and anti-gay hate crimes that have been on the rise in this country. We must take this opportunity to show the world that we will not live in fear.

The entertainment community is a generous and caring group of people. We have proven that time and again. We just need to be louder and more visible than ever before. We must raise our voices and show our strength. We must vote in the elections and do what we can to help our LGBT brothers and sisters gain and retain equality. HIV/AIDS is still a threat to the community, but we are no longer silent. This attack in Orlando reminds us all that our work is not done. Whether it's a virus causing an epidemic or a homophobic madman with an assault weapon we will not let fear and ignorance win. We stand with Orlando as a unified community.

Gary Costa is the Executive Director of Goldren Rainbow



Cathy Brooks
Las Vegas, NV



Comfort Amidst Chaos: Finding Community and Dispelling Fear

The organized chaos of Heathrow Airport's terminal 5 rose and fell around me. Undulating waves of people – some scampering madly for flights, while others, hit by travel delays, wandered aimlessly in the neutral stupor of people neither here nor there.

It was Tuesday, June 14, 2016. Just off the brutally long flight from Las Vegas, I was killing time before my connection to Paris and wandered into a shop seeking a bottle of water and snacks. I turned a corner and came upon a wall of periodicals from around the world. From nearly every front page the tragedy screamed at me.

Orlando. All Orlando.

I'd been steeped in the news since first hearing it on Sunday. The news hadn't made it into the paper I was reading but the trusty digital newsstand of Facebook delivered link after link of horror. The worst mass shooting in American history and the victims targeted could have been me.

I stood alone amidst this maelstrom of humanity at the papers. First the pain – grief for all those lives lost, the horror for the families, and then those who survived and whose lives are forever changed – washed over me again.

That grief gave way to something else. A familiar feeling that hits in the stomach and radiates like icy fire through the veins. It is known to anyone who is part of a group facing hatred and discrimination. It's fear. The fear there are people in the world who, given the opportunity, would try to exterminate me merely because I am gay.

This past March, I participated in a panel discussion for International Women's Day on the Las Vegas NPR affiliate. During the course of that interview, I mentioned I was a lesbian. It was a passing comment, tossed off-hand as a casual remark.

About 20 minutes after getting off the air I called the office to check messages and found a missed call in the queue. I rang back from my cell

phone, neglecting to mask my number. No answer, so I left a voice mail. Moments later – a text arrived:

“Hi.”

I replied:

“Well hello yourself” :) Who is this and how may I help you?”

Then it began:

“This is a member of the community you insult by your existence, you f*cking dyke. You’re not welcome here. Get the f*ck out of Vegas.”

There were more. They got worse. A few days went by with no messages and then a few days later, another call. This one left a very long and detailed voice mail. I’ll refrain from sharing it but suffice to say, it wasn’t pleasant.

I contacted the police. I contacted the security firm that minds my business. I apprised my neighbors. Everyone assured me they had my back. I didn’t need to worry. Trolls like this arise and so long as you don’t feed them they go away. I told myself they were right. That everything was going to be fine. Surrounded by support, that icy fire in my veins and that chill in my stomach dissipated.

It’s isolating, this feeling. You know there are

The worst mass shooting in American history and the victims targeted could have been me.

others who share the fear, but in the moment, it’s hard to get past it. Bigotry and hatred are powerful fuel and there are some who take

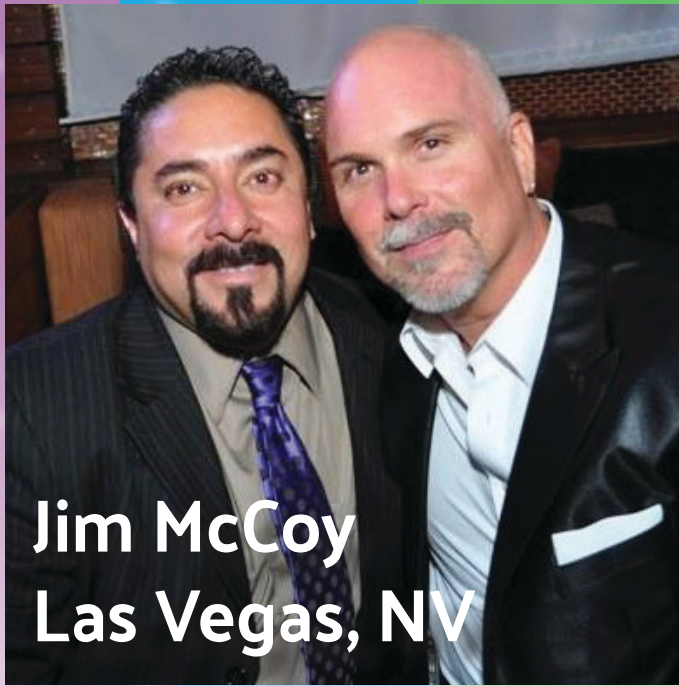
words to action. Words may never hurt me, but sticks and stones sure can.

Seeing these newspaper headlines half way around the world my heart dropped and that feeling radiated again. My eyes welled up and began to spill down my cheeks. Juggling my water and snacks and attempting to wipe the hot tears, I drew the attention of one of the clerks in the shop passing by.

His first move was to grab the teetering bottle of water, and then he looked at me. He saw the tears, glanced down and saw my American passport. Having secured my wayward purchases he gave me a gentle smile and reminded me that even when distance separates me from all I know, I am never alone.

“I’m so sorry for your loss,” he said. “What happened in your country ... there are no words. Just know that we mourn with you.”

Cathy Brooks is the owner of Hydrant Club, a social spot for urban canines and their people in downtown Las Vegas.



Jim McCoy
Las Vegas, NV

It Could Have Been Us

When I heard the news on that tragic Saturday night my blood went cold and I was in disbelief.

People dead. LGBT people dead. Shot. Killed. Murdered. Attacked. Injured. Terrorist. Hate Crime. Gays.

The number of fatalities unknown but rising.
In the end - 49 dead in total.

It could have been us.

My husband and I were silent. We did not talk about this massacre until days later. We just sat in disbelief and watched the story unravel. Somber. Lifeless. We are very active within our LGBT community. We are at the bars and establishments. We attend the galas, the rallies and events where hundreds like us gather.

It could have been us.

Reality set in when I started hearing the names and seeing the faces of my brothers and sisters who's night was abruptly ended with a bullet. Did they hear the loud pops thinking it was the music?

Did they know that in a single moment their lives would forever change? One victim was a mother dancing the night away with her son. I wish my mother would have danced with me in a club. She could have once in her life, but that never happened.

It could have been us.

Monday after the horrific event I called my family. I just needed to hear a comforting voice from thousands of miles away. A phone hug, a shoulder to cry on. We made our basic salutations and I waited to see if they had a point of view on the crisis. Nothing. No mention. No inquiry as to how my husband and I were feeling or how this affected us. They watch the news. Constantly. They could not have missed this. Ignored maybe, but not missed!

Life must be better when you wear rose colored glasses and you live in a glass house.

It could have been us.

I was just about to start the dialogue of the incident with them when I choked up. I couldn't speak. My mind went blank and my throat went dry. I had given up because I knew what I had to say would not matter to them. They will never change. Life inside their box is safe. They are safe from the outside world and news such as Orlando does not concern them. My husband is right, I expect too much from others and I set myself up for disappointment. Will they ever know just how much their ignorance hurts?

It could have been us.

I am angry. I am sad. I am numb. The real tragedy is that we can't identify this cowardly act of violence in a singular category. It is more than a HATE crime. It is more than a LGBT issue. It is more than an act of RELIGIOUS rebellion. It is more than debates on GUN CONTROL.

It is an issue of HUMANITY.

It could have been us.

Jim McCoy is Events Manager for MGM Resorts International and the daytime incarnation of Norma Llyaman, the Bearded Lady of Las Vegas.



Edward Yaeger
Mountain View, CA

An Appeal: In the Wake of Orlando

What do you say when so much has been said already about the atrocity that occurred at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando?

It does not matter – just say it anyway.

Speak often. And sincerely. Listen, too, of course. In fact, listen more than speaking. But continue speaking. Speak about your thoughts and feelings. Your confusions. Your fears. Just speak. Do not stop. Do not shut up.

What do you feel when so much has been felt thus far about the massacre at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando?

It does not matter – just continue to feel, regardless.

Do not stop feeling. Embrace all feelings, including the particularly painful ones, the dark ones, the ones that make everything seem hopeless and pointless. Let those feelings unfurl unfettered and ultimately land where they are supposed to land (on their own time). Do not repress or restrict or rush your feelings. Give

them their space and their due course.

How do you act when so much, yet so astonishingly little, has been done since the slaughter of 49 innocents in Orlando that terrible day?

It does not matter – just act anyway.

Become an advocate, an activist, an ambassador of peace both within and beyond your little bubble. Give more of your time, money, smiles, hugs, kisses. Help a stranger. Then help another stranger. And then another one. Confront bigotry and hatred. Educate the ignorant. Do not count on politicians or holy people or non-profits to do any of the work. It is up to you to do the work, to act. So act.

We honor the dead through life, through living – but only through living truly meaningfully, thoughtfully, and passionately. Not through silence. Or through suppression. Or through inaction. The latter take an ugly, if a completely unnecessary, toll on you as an individual; and an even uglier toll on your community. Do not burden yourself and others like that. Rather, nurture and equip and inspire yourself and others to not only love and be loved, but also *to be love itself*. For that is whom the dead now are – love itself. And this is how we are to connect ourselves to them: *as* love. This is the way. There is no other.

RIP.

Edward is a digital marketing professional, political commentator, and writer.



Reflections of Orlando

Early in my career I had the opportunity to briefly live and work in Tunisia, a North African country where Islam is the official state religion, highly influenced by colonial France and a large Western European tourism industry. I had come out months earlier – pride parade marcher, lesbian bar sponsored softball team and all - but remained closeted among my Tunisian and multinational peers. My first obstacle was what I considered “business and cultural survival” - to assimilate into the work culture; learn French as quickly as possible; tolerate the verbal harassment and bullying inspired by my Japanese ancestry every day while on public transportation or walking through the streets of Tunis; and manage gender “classism” as a woman in a man’s world.

I did not have the emotional and mental bandwidth to address the firestorm and potential verbal and physical harassment that would come with being open about my sexual orientation. I didn’t even try - cultural assimilation was just barely bearable without adding “gay” to the mix

of things that made me stand out. Tunisia was, and still is, one of the many Muslim countries where being gay is illegal. And, most importantly, I at that time I was still closeted to my family.

The act and behavior of Omar Mateen, who killed 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, is horrific and shocking. Interestingly, the media has honed in on his life journey. Mateen was bullied in grade school for being different, he threatened classmates with gun violence as early as the 5th grade, those who knew him felt that he struggled with his sexual orientation as an adult and lived double lives, and he physically abused his first wife who felt that “he was not a stable person”. His life experiences and behavior were symptoms of larger social, cultural and regulatory issues that cannot be ignored:

Bullying

Bullying, particularly among school-aged children, against those who look/speak/eat/see/hear/dress differently needs to be addressed systemically to supplement the programmatic work of campaigns and nonprofits. Civics and humanities classes need to be reinstated and textbooks rewritten from K to 12th grade (and not only in specialized university courses) to correctly educate our next generation of civil servants, journalists, activists, and business leaders. The diverse viewpoints of both history and current issues need to be rightfully representative of the underrepresented populations, non-traditional families, and from a perspective of indigenous peoples.

Gun Control Laws

The lack of gun control laws in the U.S. is appalling to say the least. I grew up with guns in my family, occasionally shot high powered weapons as a youth, and my teenage brother cherished a rifle given to him as a birthday gift. However, guns should never be in the hands of convicted felons, violent criminals, those on FBI watch lists, or the mentally unstable. Further, civilians have no need to carry the same weapons as our military.

Mental Health Laws

America's mental health system and service provider support needs substantial investment, as well as political, administrative, and corporate willpower. Further, the stigma of seeking professional help for mental health issues exacerbates an already heated issue, particularly among many first and second generation communities. It's a long-road to shifting culture but financial investments in the mental health system need not follow capitalism.

Culture of Violence

America's culture of violence - domestic violence, gun violence, violence against women, black on black violence, race-religious-gender non-conforming minority violence - is perpetuated by bullying and lack of gun control. But there is a much bigger cultural issue: activism is very issue or community specific. What happens when the LGBTQ community comes together to drive change for religious minorities or applies its organizing power to fight powerful gun lobbies? Transformational change.

Our country's political environment is ripe for inspiring violence and extremism. With the advancement of rights and protections of the LGBTQ community, we will continue to see reactions from groups that feel a loss of power and an irrational, misplaced anger because they feel as if they have - or are - "less than."

As my life and career journeys unfold, I'm inspired to contribute my resources to prevent these acts of violence and hate from compounding into bigger geo-political conflicts. I think about the immigration of Japanese in America in the early 1900s, the ensuing political

climate of fear and anger against immigrants and the growth of anti-Japanese sentiments during the Second World War. Never again should we allow a group of people with a softer voice or less political clout be incarcerated. My relatives who were born in the United States were uprooted from their homes, schools and churches at a moment's notice and inserted in makeshift prison camps for years because of their race. Today,

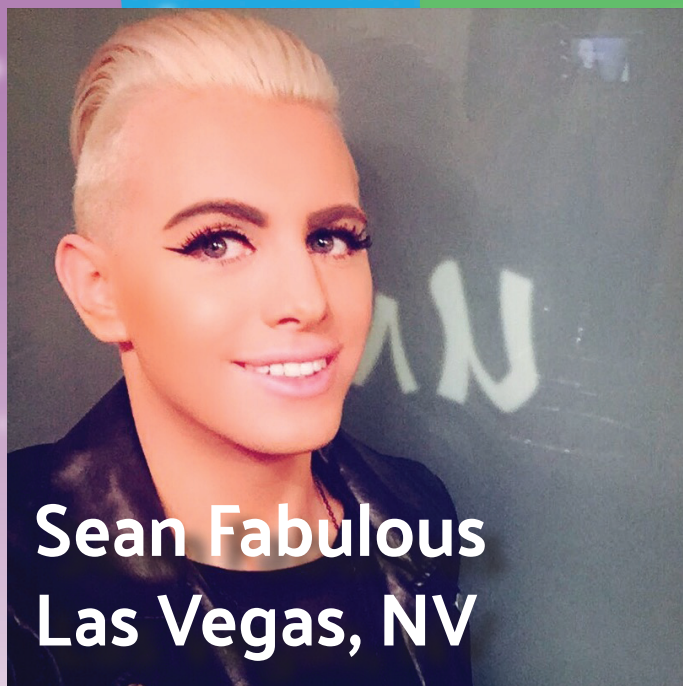
70 years later, the survivors continue to feel the effects of displaced childhoods, including long-term health issues from lacking medical care and the environmental conditions of the camps.

We are at a tipping point in a crucial

election year, following nearly 200 mass shootings in the U.S. so far in 2016, a continued migrant crisis, shifting power among global allies and shocking voter outcomes. I'm inspired to become more educated on root causes of the horrors of Orlando and to do something about it.

Being a bystander is complacency. Indifference is contributing to atrocity.

Gwen Migita is the Vice President Corporate Citizenship & Sustainability for Caesars Entertainment, former board member of The LGBTQ Center and Board of Governor for the Human Rights Campaign in the Las Vegas community. She currently sits on the advisory board of Sustainable Brands, corporate advisory board of the World Resources Institute, advisory board of Seattle University's Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability, and is a Trustee of Green Chips in Southern Nevada. She also sits on Hillary Clinton for President's Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders National Council. Views are her own and not that of her employer, personal or professional affiliations.



The Pulse of Our Community

The beat of the music still going strong at 2am. Being surrounded by friends and friends that have become family. Seeing familiar faces in line for the bathroom. Embracing our community that comes together to celebrate. Forgetting the outside world's judgment because I feel less out of the norm in the presence of my LGBTQ peers.

These are the thoughts that came to mind when I thought about being inside a gay club.

Now when I think of a gay club I think of the music not masking the sounds of gunfire. I think of wondering which friends I won't get to see again.

I think about seeing familiar faces now emoting looks of fear, hiding in the bathroom. I think about how our community now comes together to mourn. I think about someone's hate being powerful enough to break apart the cocoon of a sacred place for those deemed as different.

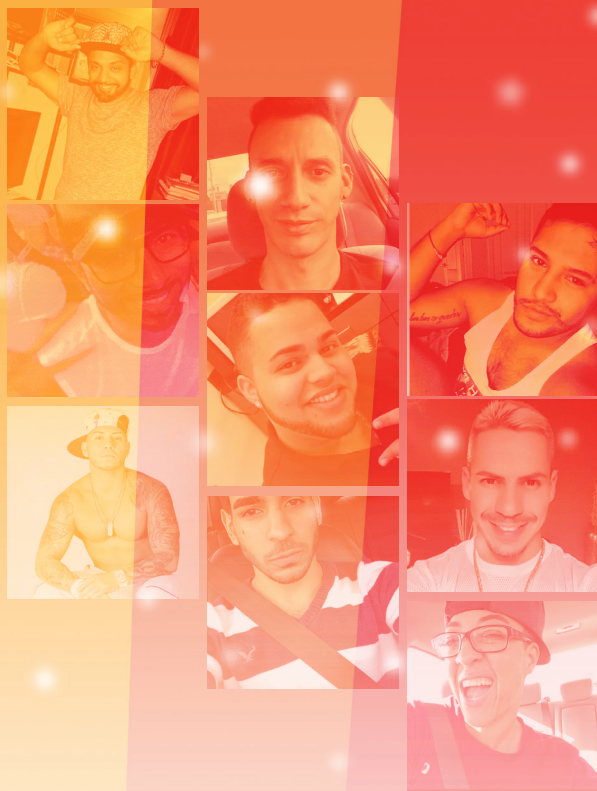
My heart breaks for everyone who lost their lives that night in Pulse, and for those who were

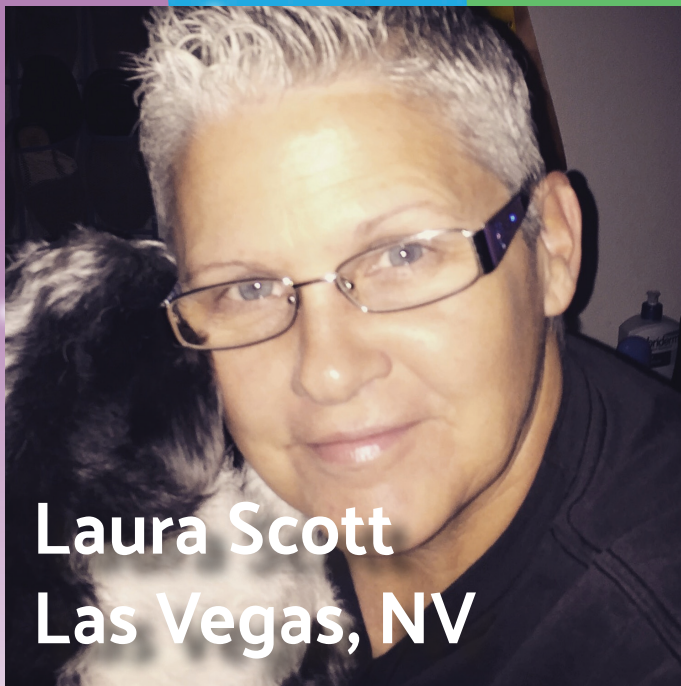
injured. My heart breaks for everyone who lost family and friends that night. My heart breaks for our community, whom is intertwined as one. My heart breaks for all Americans, as mass shootings continue to increase in how often and how many and we are left unprotected by our government.

Fear may lead people to hatred, but we must not let hatred lead us to fear. Our community has a history of coming together to inflict change where we see injustice. We came together to ensure marriage equality in 2015, and now we will come together to pressure our government to pass stronger gun laws. Only then will we be able to continue to congregate in gay clubs across the country and celebrate our individuality and how wonderful that is.

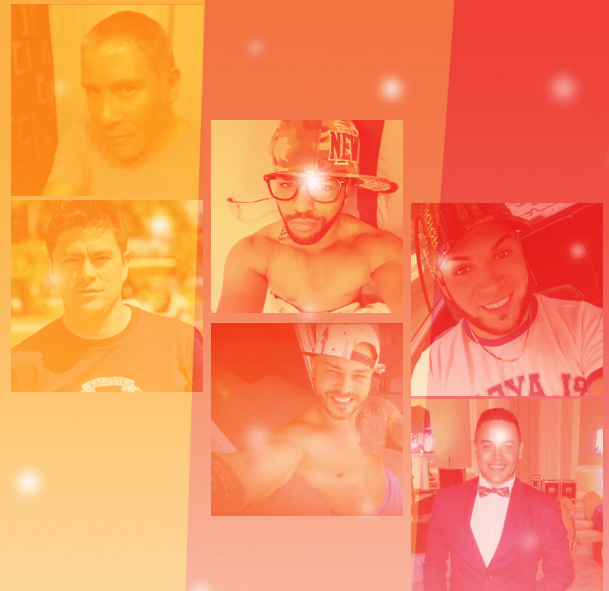
The victims of pulse will never be forgotten because just like the pulse in our body is able to measures our rhythm and heartbeat, adversity and tragedy can measure the pulse of our community—and our heart beats strong.

Godspeed.





Laura Scott
Las Vegas, NV



Orlando Tragedy

I witness daily the anger some feel for others simply for stating their opinions regarding the Orlando tragedy, that I think they're forgetting what's truly important here.

The ongoing battle about gun control and religion, was the killer gay or straight, was it attributed to his radical religious ideas; none of this will change what happened that very early Sunday morning.

What I care about are the 53 lives who will live with this horrific crime every waking moment, the families who cry themselves to sleep because they did the unthinkable, they outlived their child.

Are we to forget the real victims here? I am ashamed to admit, I cannot remember any of the names of them, but the murderer, his name is a permanent fixture in my brain. It would be easy to blame the media for this, but I have to take responsibility as well.

As humans we are fixated on the bad in the

world, whether that be gossip, murder, or yes, even the Kardashians. We mourn the loss of innocent lives for a short period of time, then immediately start the blame game. Enter the gun control and Religious battle.

I assume in 1791, when the Second Amendment was adopted into the US Constitution, that the signers of this didn't expect a gun to be able to produce 600 rounds of ammunition a minute, such as the AK47. A musket back in those days could barely shoot one round in a minute. That's my one and only argument into the Gun Control war.

I go back to the beginning of this article and think how I would feel if it happened here in Las Vegas. Would I feel differently, would I be angrier? I hope I would feel the same, loving, compassionate thoughts for the victims and their families, but with one difference, I would know the names of those victims, and not give a single thought to the murderer.



Christopher Twist Las Vegas, NV

Maybe He Was

Omar Mateen has killed 49 people—the most people who have ever been killed in a mass shooting in the US. I have an idea of why this man might have killed all of these people, and I believe that nobody else has thought about Omar Mateen in the same way. Omar had been going to this gay club for three years before he killed all of these gay men. People have also told newspapers that he was always very, very drunk each time he was in the club. His divorced wife told newspapers that he would hurt her, quite a lot of the time that they were together.

People seem to think that he had always hated men who love men, and that he was waiting for the right time to kill gay men because he hated gay men the most of all people in the world. This might have been the case, but I have another idea for this man's problem in his mind. He might have been a gay man himself, but he of course wasn't able to be out and be completely Muslim at the same time. So, he tried to have a wife, but that may have only confirmed to himself that he was

gay and hated that he couldn't do what he wanted to do; which was to have a boyfriend instead of a wife. Most religions are not happy with the idea of gay people being in the world and doing what they do naturally. He couldn't live without the ideas of Muslim living, because that was such a colossal part of him from his childhood into his adult life. Many of us know the struggle to live as a the person who isn't the true person that we really are.

He was going to this club for three years before he killed 49 people. If he hated gay men so much, wouldn't he kill them sooner? It didn't need three years of seeing the same things, men kissing each other and touching each other. That was maybe the problem, that he couldn't do what all of these other men could do; and that he thought he would never be able to have what the other people in this club had. Perhaps the idea of being gay and Muslim was far too much for him to think, but he must have thought about it every day, which would make anybody a little bit crazy than if they could just do what they want.

Perhaps this is why he killed all of these people, because he knew that he could never have what they had. He was one of them, but he wasn't one of them. He couldn't tell his family, his divorced wife, or any friends the truth about him. Was this why he was at this club for three years? He may have thought about each time that he would try to kiss a man, but he never could. The idea of doing such a thing was too much, so he was there but not doing what he wanted to do.

He may have tried Grindr. Possibly looking for sex, or he might have been telling as many people as possible to change themselves. Maybe he wanted all of gay men to have the problem he had: not being the person that he truly was..

In the end, maybe he just wanted as many of them to be dead; just like how he felt inside of himself.

Christopher Twist is a suspension artist and author. His book Anathema is available at Amazon.com

MGV

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WE STAND WITH ORLANDO

Machine Guns Vegas believes in responsible gun ownership and common sense legislation.



Las Vegas has long been the magic capitol of the world, featuring magicians ranging from Copperfield to Angel to Penn & Teller, Piff the Magic Dragon and newcomer Mat Franco. Therefore, it takes a daring, fresh and fearless performer to throw their hat into the mix – and that’s exactly what French export Xavier Mortimer is doing.

After gracing stages in more than 30 countries, and most recently starring in Cirque du Soleil’s acclaimed show Michael Jackson ONE, Mortimer marks the first Cirque performer to launch a headlining show on the Las Vegas Strip.

The production – Xavier Mortimer’s *Magical Dream* – is unlike any other in Las Vegas. Audiences find themselves immediately transported into Mortimer’s dream world. Along with his unconventional cast of characters, Mortimer takes the audience on an adventure they won’t soon forget.

“I wanted to create a show and experience with a strong sense of wonder and drama, but also mash it up with a universal kind of comedy that everyone will enjoy,” said Mortimer. “I have my hands in every aspect of this production. I created

all the acts, I brought the characters to life, I even composed the majority of the music. This is me at my best, and I can’t wait to show everyone what my dream world looks and feels like.”

With illusions and talents that defy simple explanation, the 70-minute performance – directed by fellow Frenchman and international celebrity Alex Goude – poetically unfolds through more than 14 acts. With the wonder of *Mary Poppins*, the theatrics of Charlie Chaplin, and an array of talents unique to himself, this all-ages production transcends what you thought you knew about Las Vegas entertainment.

Xavier Mortimer’s Magical Dream will perform 6 nights per week (Wednesdays dark) at 7 p.m. in the Sin City Theater. Tickets are available via www.ticketmaster.com.

Gay.Vegas /advertising



In August 2014, Gay.Vegas launched as one of the first .VEGAS domains, and quickly became one of the most popular destination LGBTQ websites in the Southwest. Through our partnership with QVegas Magazine, Gay.Vegas started hosting QVegas Magazine under the Gay.Vegas site.

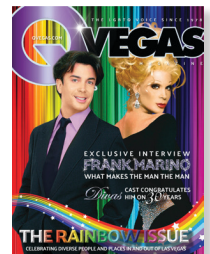


At the beginning of 2015, QVegas made a bold move and discontinued a 37-year history as a print publication, taking social and digital media head-on. Powered by new online publishing capabilities, the combined media forces have since propelled digital media impressions and engagements across web, mobile, email, and social media.

12 Issues Per Year – Every Month

As an all-digital publication, we deliver QVegas to our readers in multiple formats. Without the cost and constraints of print, we provide advertisers with a lower cost and higher value opportunity that provides measurable impressions and engagement.

QVegas is the largest and oldest publication serving the LGBT community in Las Vegas, and Gay.Vegas brings new-media growth. As our digital platform grows, so will your opportunity to reach thousands of LGBTQ consumers every day.



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Celebrated for its roster of unparalleled musical theatre offerings, The Smith Center for the Performing Arts announces its debut of IDAHO! The Comedy Musical, exclusively at Reynolds Hall this July.

Written by Buddy Sheffield with music by Sheffield and Keith Thompson, preview performances will be held July 6 – 8, followed by the official opening night on July 9 and additional performances July 10 – 17. This limited engagement will offer patrons the rare opportunity to see the show as it is being developed.

The show brings a hilarious new love story to life as Cassie Purdy, a mail-order bride from Ohio, arrives to Idaho to marry the notorious Jed Strunk, a real toad gagger who's got the personality of a festering wart and enough money to buy every last spud in town. Upon her arrival, Cassie encounters the handsome Whip Masters, falling in love to Strunk's dismay and setting in motion a whirlwind of events that end in three couples either discovering or re-discovering the loves of their lives.

The cast of 18 led by eight featured players

includes Alex Ellis as Ida Dunham, Carmen Ruby Floyd as Mavis White Eagle, Jessica Fontana as Cassie Purdy, Nathaniel Hackmann as Whip Masters, Matt Loehr as Slim Johnson, Jen Perry as Aunt Pearl, Jay Rogers as Uncle Fate And Paul Vogt as Jed Strunk.

The cast will also include an acclaimed ensemble featuring Alyssa Brizzi as Belle and Dream Cassie, Blake Hammond as Doc Generic and Exposition Jack, Holly Holcomb as Crazy Betty Felter, Christine Hudman as Anita Polk, Allison Blair McDowell as Amanda Ride, Alex Puette as Joe And Dream Whip, Destinee Rea as Shenequa, Robbie Roby as George Meany and Dance Captain, Connor Russell as Yank Daley and James Tabeek as Manny Meany.

Tickets are now on sale starting at \$19 and can be purchased at The Smith Center box office, by phone at 702-749-2000 or online at TheSmithCenter.com.

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Fremont Street Experience's Rock of Vegas summer concert series will feature a free concert on Independence Day Weekend from Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Saturday, July 2 at 9 p.m. on the 1st Street Stage. The popular ska-swing band will play everything from their breakout hit "Zoot Suit Riot" to songs off their newest album *The Boop-A-Doo*.

"Cherry Poppin' Daddies bring a fun and exciting atmosphere that our visitors love and we are excited to have them perform for a second year," said Thomas Bruny, Director of Marketing of Fremont Street Experience. "From free concerts to value-oriented hotels, gambling and dining, Downtown Las Vegas has the best deals in Las Vegas. There is something for everyone to enjoy."

Celebrating its eighth season, the free concerts have become one of the most popular summertime events in Las Vegas. This year's lineup will turn the legendary downtown Las Vegas entertainment venue into summer's alternative destination through Labor Day weekend with a free concert series that showcases

a stellar lineup of bands that have taken music to the edge.

Cherry Poppin' Daddies

Cherry Poppin' Daddies became a popular act during the swing revival of the late 1990s although the eight-piece band had formed one decade prior in Eugene, Oregon. The Cherry Poppin' Daddies broke into the musical mainstream with their 1997 swing compilation *Zoot Suit Riot: The Swingin' Hits of the Cherry Poppin' Daddies*. The Daddies have been playing songs on tour from their newest release called *The Boop-A-Doo*.

For complete information on the headliner concerts and nightly entertainment, visit <http://www.vegasexperience.com/>.



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At the May Lambda Business Association monthly luncheon, Lambda, QVegas Magazine, and Gay.Vegas announced an intent to collaborate on efforts that would benefit Lambda members and bring greater focus to LGBTQ-owned and LGBTQ-friendly businesses in Las Vegas.

One month later, broad-stroke details of the collaboration were agreed upon at the Lambda board meeting and announced at the June luncheon.

Since going digital in 2015, QVegas Magazine, hosted on Gay.Vegas, has remained the #1 trafficked LGBTQ site serving Las Vegas in the US. More recently, innovations on Gay.Vegas have surged the site's traffic resulting in traffic surpassing all LGBTQ serving Las Vegas globally.

Under the terms of the agreement, Lambda members will be listed in the new Gay.Vegas Business Directory for free and the Lambda Online Business Directory will leverage the optimized back-end technology that will drive the Gay.Vegas directory service.

By listing Lambda member businesses on the

Gay.Vegas site, listings will benefit from the web traffic and SEO optimization Gay.Vegas provides, and by leveraging the same technology on the Lambda site, listings will gain social media optimizations that business owners can leverage in promoting their businesses across Twitter and Facebook.

The new directory will make its debut on Gay.Vegas and Lambdalv.org early this fall.

In addition, QVegas Magazine will extend a 50% discount to Lambda Small Business members for advertising.

Lambda Business Association, like all LGBTQ-serving non-profit organizations in Las Vegas, also receive a free ad in QVegas and Gay.Vegas every month.

Photo: Paul Ershler

Safety is Metro topic at July 13 lunch; Raffle will support Orlando survivors

Metro Sheriff Joe Lombardo or his representative will discuss security & safety for the LGBTQ community



Also representatives from the HRC and Nevada's for Background Checks

Special raffle to benefit victims and survivors of Orlando's June 12 tragedy
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Wednesday, July 13th at 11:30 am
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