



Collective Grief & Global LGBTQ Responses to the Pulse Nightclub Shooting

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Trigger Warning

Violence

Homophobia

Pulse Shooting

Racism

Honouring those lost at the Pulse Shooting



Stanley Almodovar III, 23 years old
Amanda Alvear, 25 years old
Oscar A Aracena-Montero, 26 years old
Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, 33 years old
Antonio Davon Brown, 29 years old
Darryl Roman Burt II, 29 years old
Angel L. Candelario-Padro, 28 years old
Juan Chevez-Martinez, 25 years old
Luis Daniel Conde, 39 years old
Cory James Connell, 21 years old
Tevin Eugene Crosby, 25 years old
Deonka Deidra Drayton, 32 years old
Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, 31 years old
Leroy Valentin Fernandez, 25 years old
Mercedez Marisol Flores, 26 years old
Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz, 22 years old
Juan Ramon Guerrero, 22 years old

Paul Terrell Henry, 41 years old
Frank Hernandez, 27 years old
Miguel Angel Honorato, 30 years old
Javier Jorge-Reyes, 40 years old
Jason Benjamin Josaphat, 19 years old
Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, 30 years old
Anthony Luis Laureanodisla, 25 years old
Christopher Andrew Leinonen, 32 years old
Alejandro Barrios Martinez, 21 years old
Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, 49 years old
Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, 25 years old
Kimberly Morris, 37 years old
Akyra Monet Murray, 18 years old
Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, 20 years old
Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez, 25 years old
Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, 36 years old
Joel Rayon Paniagua, 32 years old

Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, 35 years old
Enrique L. Rios, Jr., 25 years old
Jean C. Nives Rodriguez, 27 years old
Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, 35 years old
Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, 24 years old
Yilmary Rodriguez Solivan, 24 years old
Edward Sotomayor Jr., 34 years old
Shane Evan Tomlinson, 33 years old
Martin Benitez Torres, 33 years old
Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega, 24 years old
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, 37 years old
Luis S. Vielma, 22 years old
Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, 50 years old
Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, 37 years old
Jerald Arthur Wright, 31 years old

Current Study



Part of a larger study on LGBTQ Discrimination

✔ Open-ended Questions

- ✔ “How were you impacted by the shooting?”
- ✔ “Has the shooting influenced your views on any of the related topics?”
- ✔ “How did your family and friends react to the shooting, and how did their reactions impact you?”

✔ Thematic Analysis & Thematic Networks

✔ Sample

N=323

Age: 18-74, Mean: 29.9, SD = 12

23% Cisgender Men; 5.9% Trans Men

46.1% Cisgender Women; 5.9% Trans Women

18.9% Gender Queer / Self-Described

Currently Living In:

- USA – 56.3%; Canada – 28%; UK – 5.5%; Australia – 4.2%

- 13 Other Countries – 6%

Sexual Identity

- 4.7% Heterosexual / 5.3% Straight • LGBTQ, Two Spirit, Asexual: 94.7%

Thematic Analysis



Basic Themes Identified:

- ✓ Grief & Guilt
- ✓ Safety
 - ✓ Reminder
 - ✓ Disillusionment: Burst Bubbles
 - ✓ Safe Space Violation
- ✓ Personalization
- ✓ Community & Chosen Family
- ✓ Resistance & Mobilization
- ✓ Family & Friend Responses
- ✓ To Arm or Unarm?
- ✓ Racism
- ✓ In & Out of the Closet

Thematic Network



Response

Grief & Guilt
Safety

- Reminder
 - Disillusionment:
Burst Bubbles
 - Safe Space
Violation
- Personalization



Support

Community &
Chosen Family
Resistance &
Mobilization
Family & Friend
Responses



Divides

To Arm or Unarm?
Racism
In & Out of the
closet

Response

Grief & Guilt

Safety

Personalization



Response: Grief & Guilt



Obviously - Grief was a common response

- Participants from around the globe expressed grief in similar ways and just as strongly
- The Global LGBTQ Community was “shaken to its core” by the shooting
- Participants described classic grief responses:
 - Panic Attacks
 - Invasive Thoughts
 - Tightness in Chest
 - And even Suicidal Ideation
 - Responses lasted for days or even weeks
 - Difficulty concentrating or working

But – Grief was also expressed with guilt for feeling grief over the death of strangers

- Who am “I” to feel grief?
- “Am I allowed to feel grief?”

“invasive thoughts about the attack...
tightness in my chest”

- Sam, Genderqueer/Queer)

“...concentration and ability to work”

- Becky 32/Female/Queer-bi

Grief & Guilt

“experience of community grief”

Lee 23/Genderqueer/Bi-Queer

“intensely suicidal for a week”

- Sarah, 19/Female/Lesbian.

“I cry every time I read that '49'. I'm mourning people I've never met. I'm mourning the violation that took place”

- Lisa 19/MTF/Queer

“I was devastated! I avoided going outside so that I wouldn't be around other people. I couldn't stop crying and kept flipping through emotions of grief, anger, hate, sorrow, confusion, bewilderment, frustration...I can be out in public now, but have to avoid thinking about it or else I start to break down...”

- John 52/Male/Queer

“panic attacks” - Sarah, 19/Female/Lesbian

Response: Safety



Participants had a general concern for safety

Represented in three forms:

- Reminder that safety is not guaranteed for LGBTQ people
- Disillusionment or Burst Bubble – realizing that LGBTQ are not safe
- Discussion of safe spaces being violated

*“[I Am more] aware that showing affection or speaking about same sex relations **is putting a lot of trust in your surroundings, so it is a safety issue**” -Laura 24/Female/Queer-Bi*

*“[I am] more afraid and **aware of exits in crowded areas and clubs**”
-Marie Female/Lesbian*

*“Always know a way out ... like it or not, we always need to **be on the lookout**”
-Emmett 26/Male/Gay*

Safety

Reminder, Disillusionment, Safe Space Violation

*“[It] reminded me that I have to **be vigilant [with] how I express myself, and that I could be the victim of a hate crime**” -Elijah 20/Male/Bi*

Response: Safety - Reminder



Many participants – especially older ones – expressed that the shooting was a REMINDER that LGBTQ people are STILL not safe.

- Spoke of remembering past traumas and experiences of discrimination
- Not a sense of shock, but a sense of “we always knew this, but temporarily forgot”

It was a reminder that LGBTQ people are still in “stark” danger just for existing and that the fight for LGBTQ rights is not over.

Ultimately = reminder that LGBTQ are still very vulnerable despite all of the advancements in civil rights.

“... a reminder how I'll never really be accepted”

-Jamie Male/Gay

“I felt fear of being out or outed that reminded me of how afraid I was almost 30 years ago” -Beth 67/Female/Bisexual

“lulled into a false sense of security”

-Dan 31/FTM/Bi

Safety

Reminder

“...some of the younger LGBTQ+ community members have forgotten our history, because there's been such a sense of progress and things getting better, we forget this sort of hate is very much alive” -Toni Genderqueer/Pansexual

“legitimize collective fear”

-Andi 34/Genderqueer/Queer

“The first two days, every time that I have been harassed or threatened played in a continuous loop”

-Shannon 57/Female/Lesbian

“I could feel in a moment a torrent of memory. I was reminded of every homophobic act I had witnessed, every time I had to struggle simply to assert my own existence”


-Corry 21/Male/Queer

“further highlighted that the fight for our rights is not over” -Jacob 18/FTM/Bi

“how vulnerable we still are”

-Celina 19/Female/Lesbian

Response: Safety – Disillusionment



For some, the notion of being at risk of violence due to being LGBTQ was an EYE OPENING experience

Participants described the sense of having their “Bubble Burst”

- I was Naïve
- I have never felt unsafe before Pulse
- I mistakenly thought that discrimination was a “thing of the past”

On the one hand

- It’s great that we have come so far that some young LGBTQ people don’t associate their identity with a risk for violent attacks
- On the other, it further underscores the question of how well LGBTQ know their own history

“I never feared for my life as a LGBT individual until the morning after Pulse” -Melissa 28/Female/Lesbian

*“I thought people had grown and become more tolerant of differences but I was **brutally forced back into reality of the world...**” -John 52/Male/Queer*

“never felt unsafe” (Whitney 20/Female/Queer

“Somehow I thought humanity was more evolved” -Rob 21/Male/Gay

Safety

Disillusionment

*“[The Pulse shooting] **burst my little gay bubble.** It was sort of like a reality check”
-Vicki 24/Female/Lesbian*

“naïve” (Ross 20/Male/Gay

*“It has **burst the bubble** that we live in in terms of how safe we may be, especially in places that are supposed to be specifically **safe for queer people**” -Mackenzie 34/
Female/Lesbian*

Safety: Safe Space Violation



The Queer Nightclub location was associated with a unique violation of ‘safe space’

- Exacerbated by it being Latinx Dance Night
- Queer bars and nightclubs have a specific historical significance to the LGBTQ community

Nightclubs discussed as:

- Places to build identity
- A Safe Haven
- The “One” place where LGBTQ people can be themselves

Ultimately created feeling of “No place left” or that NO place is safe, if it could happen here, of all places.

*“Pulse is our space, one **meant to be a haven** from exactly that sort of homophobic violence”*

-Toby 27/FTM/Bi

*“[Gay bars are] one of the **only places I go where I feel free to be fully myself**, and to see how that oasis could be attacked in Orlando was shocking” -Andre 25/Male/Gay*

“safe haven”

-Zac 28/Male/Gay

Safety

Safe Space Violation

*“It hurts to think about the fact that they were all **together in the happiest time of the year for a lot of LGBTQ+ people**. The time where you can be free and be yourself. Straight people don't understand because **almost all spaces are made for them**, but there is something great about being in a space that is outwardly and openly inclusive of you when you don't experience that every day. It makes me sick to think about people dying there, in that atmosphere “*

- Alice 21/Female/Queer

*“Pulse was supposed to be a place where folks could go and be themselves, where people **didn't have to hide their orientation or be in fear of hostility**” -Diane 38/Female/Bi*

Response: Personalization



“It Could Have Been Me.”

Many participants were shaken by the notion that it could have been them or their friends

- Had been at a gay bar that night
- Had been to Pulse specifically
- That their identity makes them a target – no matter where they are in the world

Some went so far as to say they felt the Pulse Shooting WAS an attack against them

Heightened among those with dual identities – racialized LGBTQ who also feel marginalized within the LGBTQ community

“Also, being a person of Mexican heritage, the fact that it was not only queer people, but mostly other latinx queer people like me makes me feel all the worse” -Whitney 20/Female/Queer.

*“personally attacked”
-Bradley 27/Male/Gay*

Personalization

... it could have been me

*“I cried. It hit me that people hate me and **they hate us. They won't stop killing us**”
-Lisa 19/MTF/Queer*

*“It reminded me that there are still people, who although they have never even met me, hate me, and **would gladly kill me if they had the chance**”*

-William 18/Male/Gay

“Hey, this could happen to any of us. That could have been my boyfriend bleeding out on that floor. This personalized it more for me” -Emmett 26/Male/Gay

Support

Community & Chosen Family
Resistance & Mobilization
Family & Friend Responses



Support: Community & Chosen Family



- Many expressed importance of seeking support WITHIN the LGBTQ community after the shooting
- Needed to “grieve” with the LGBTQ community
- Did not want to be with non-LGBTQ communities who “did not understand”
- Many described receiving condolences from individuals outside of the LGBTQ community as though they had lost family members
 - This seems to be an element that sets this kind of shooting apart from other mass shootings → emphasizes the impact on the global LGBTQ community
 - E.G. – Imagine receiving condolences after a movie theatre shooting because you frequently attend movies.

Communities came together to “mourn those lost in the fight for equality” and to reaffirm purpose of Pride

*“Although I didn't know anyone personally, I felt as though I had lost **family**” -Steve 23/Male/Gay*

*“The gay community really is a **community in a way straight people are not so we feel for each other maybe more**” -Luc FTM/Straight*

*“... the attack on my **brothers and sisters** in what was supposed to be a safe place” -Rose MTF/Bi*

*“I wanted to be with my queer friends.”
-Rhonda 25/Female/Asexual*

*“I felt like I had lost **49 family members**” -Piper 23/Female/Queer*

Community & Chosen Family

*“Seeing it happen to my **brothers and sisters** in a place that was our space was especially hard” -Andre 25/Male/Gay*

*“... it united people. But also felt like a personal **attack on my family**”
-Paula 25/Female/Lesbian*

*“I found myself wanting to be around and get support from my **lgbtq friends, rather than my straight ones, because only they really understand the trauma that happened. It made me turn inward to the community**” -Becky 32/Female/Queer-Bi*

Support: Resistance & Mobilization



Although there were extreme expressions of grief and mourning

These were often accompanied by expressions of resilience – within the same respondents.

Many spoke of how seeing the strength and SIZE of the LGBTQ community helped them to move through their grief

“... stronger unity in the local LGBT community and a determination to not let this event scare us from living our lives” -Aaron 27/Male/Gay

Resistance & Mobilization

*“First it upset me, then it angered me. **Now it's mobilized me**” -Jes 49/Genderqueer/Queer*

*“It has reminded me that the **fight for equality begun by our elders is definitely not over**”*

-Rhonda 25/Female/Asexual

*“I felt a mix of sadness, rage and **pride (to rally with my chosen family) all at once**”*

-Matt 20/Male/Gay

*“We can **grieve now, but we gotta stand up, look out for each others' safety, as well as to embrace and love one another**”*

-Katerina 19/Female/Lesbian

Support: Family & Friend Responses



We also asked how their friends and family had responded to the shooting and to the participant.

There were mixed experiences ranging from homophobic jokes to genuine concern and support.

Perhaps the most noted response that was bothersome was a lack of response.

While some expressed condolences, many made no mention of it at all

This seemed to be juxtaposed against other recent shootings that family members had commented on and discussed extensively.

*“I was shocked though to have a couple of my friends **making jokes** about the shooting a few days later” -William 18/Male/Gay*

Family & Friend Responses

*“My straight friends who I am out to expressed **similar sentiments, though without fear and anxiety**” -Linds 18/Female/Lesbian*

*“I feel horrible and wish somebody would have just asked me if I was okay. **Nobody asked me if I was okay, and I'm really not okay, and I don't think I'm ever going to completely get over that...** The pretty much total lack of response or concern has really **fucked me up**” -Sarah, 19/Female/Lesbian*

*“They were all upset by it, but **not scared like I (and other LGBTQ people were).** Many of them also **didn't seem to understand the cultural importance of Pride or places like Pulse to the community**” -Amanda 23/Female/Gay*

*“Queer people have been incredible. **Hetero people have dropped the ball in a big way. Not a single person has said anything**” - Andi 34/Genderqueer/Queer*

Support: Family & Friend Responses



The lack of response and dismissive responses from family and friends served as a ‘second attack’

- Reminder or learning of family / friend’s lack of support for LGBTQ issues or the participants themselves
- The shooting was devastating, but the non-LGBTQ responses were, in some ways, “equally destructive”
- Contributed to feelings of alienation, rejection, and vulnerability
 - Especially among those without close ties to LGBTQ communities

*“I was with [my family] when the news broke, and it was psychologically harmful to see them **turn up their noses at the mere existence of the club**”*

-Viviane 27/MTF/Pansexual

Family & Friend Responses

*“the fact that it was a gay club was enough for them to **roll their eyes**” -Jamie Male/Gay*

*“They have **completely overlooked the LGBT** issue and focused on terrorism. I felt very aware of how different my perspective is from them”*

-Brittney 28/Female/Gay

*“... mom had told me 'the news is trying to make it into a 'gay' thing', made me upset as she **refused to acknowledge** it was a hate crime against LGBTQ individuals and community...” -Chris Genderqueer/Queer*

Divides

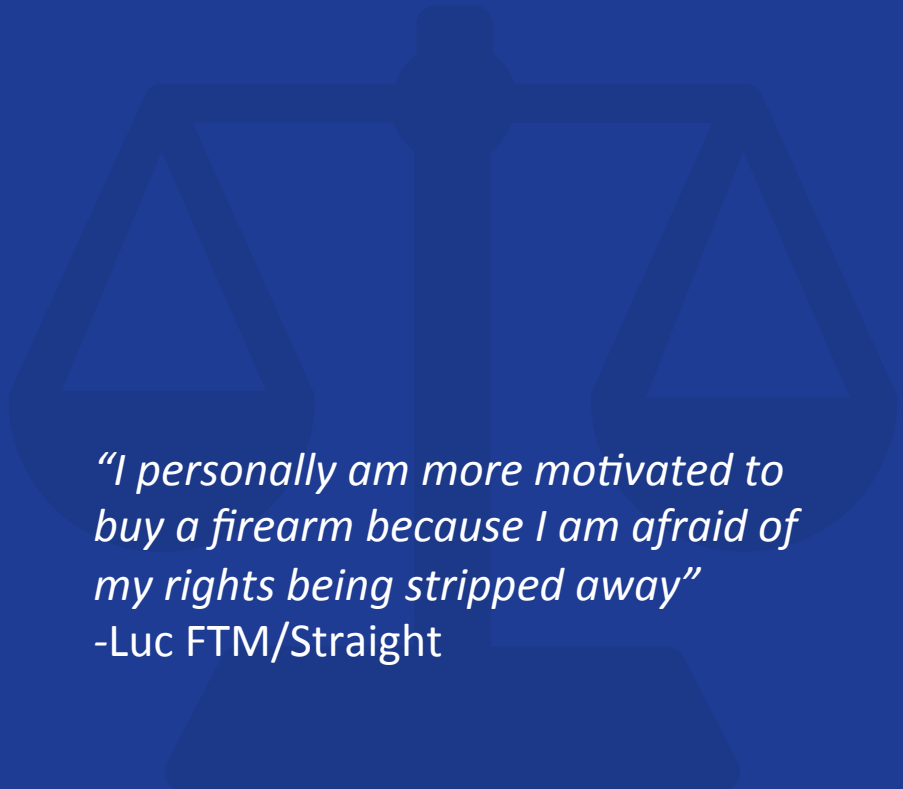
To Arm or Unarm?
Racism
In & Out of the Closet



“NO MORE GUNS”

- Andi 34/Genderqueer/Queer

Arm or Unarm



“I personally am more motivated to buy a firearm because I am afraid of my rights being stripped away”

-Luc FTM/Straight

Racism

*“**Racism in America is disgusting**, and racists/Islamophobes will jump onto anyone's cause if it allows them to throw brown people under the bus”*
-Sarah, 19/Female/Lesbian

*“... immediate **halt on Muslim** immigration”* -Mark 26/Male/Gay

Divides: In or Out of the Closet?



The most common topic that the sample was divided on was closeting

- Some responded to the shooting by being propelled to come out for the very first time
- Some responded by wanting to come out more or to be even more visible
- Some were motivated to finally connect with the LGBTQ community for the first time by attending a vigil or pride event
- Conversely, some responded by wanting to go back into the closet
 - Or cancelling plans to finally come out – due to not feeling safe

*“I wouldn't hold my partners hand in public for a few days, I almost didn't go to the vigil I organized, and **I considered leaving my position on my city's Pride board**” -Piper 23/Female/Queer.*

*“Nothing will hide my pride”
-Lacey 26/Female/Gay*

In & Out of the Closet

*“I wish I wasn't gay. I **wish conversion therapy actually worked**” -Jamie Male/Gay*

*“**I took my pride buttons off my backpack** for fear of a rise in homophobic violence” - Court 20/
Genderqueer/Queer*

*“I am mostly in the closet and I have never felt so **strongly to come out publicly**” -Willow 33/
Female/Bi*

*“I now fly a huge rainbow flag in my window, went to a vigil - my first queer event - and have become much **more fierce in fighting for myself**” -Amel 26/MTF/Lesbian*

*“After attending a requiem and vigil **I found the courage** to come out” -Tali 26/Female/Queer*

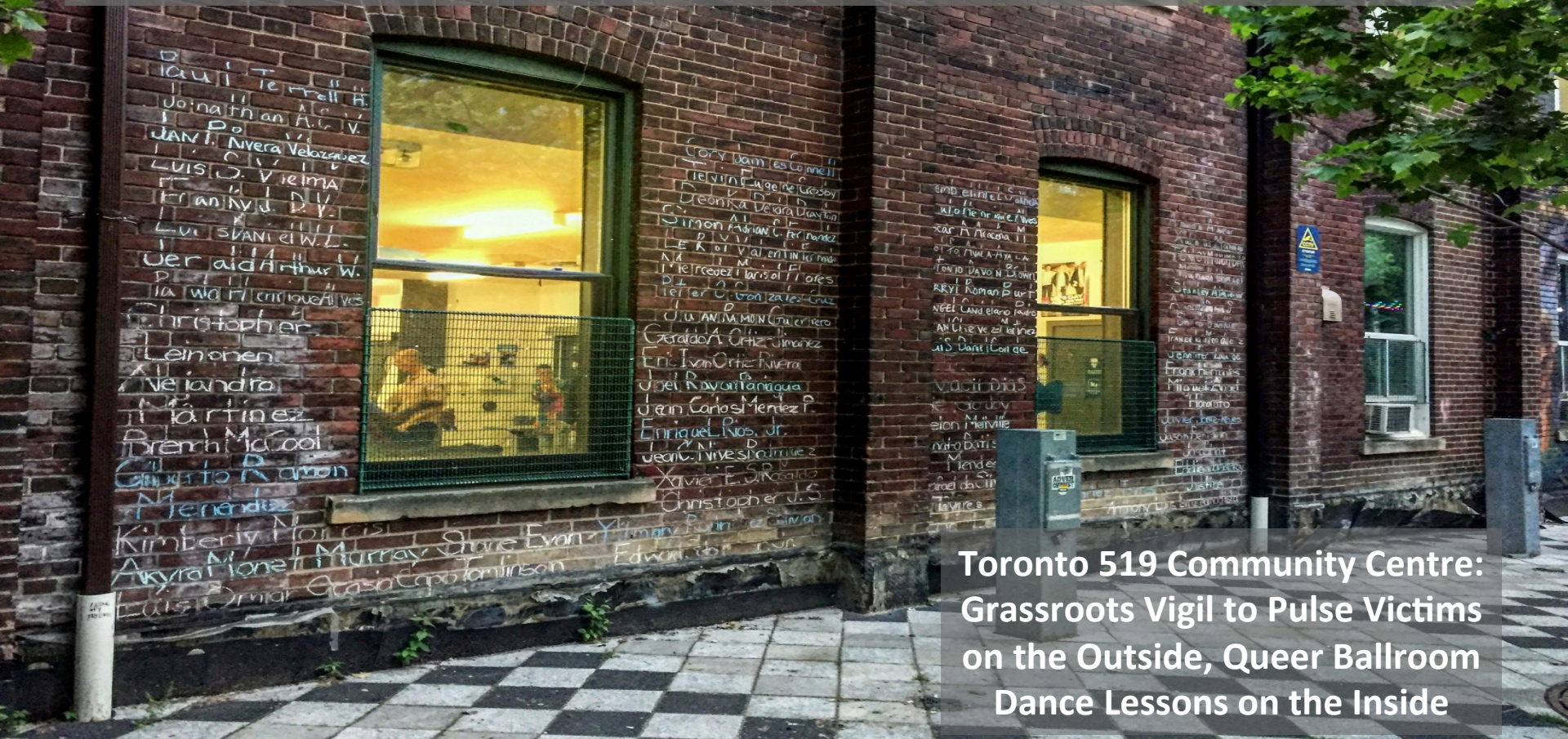
Safe Spaces, Chosen Family & Resiliency

- ✓ Importance of “chosen family” and LGBT+ communities
For support, solidarity, resiliency and mobilization
- ✓ Families can be divisive
The LGBT+ is not homogenous, not immune to holding varied prejudices.
- ✓ Importance of Safe Spaces
For constructing queer identities
- ✓ Resiliency



(Dewaele, Cox, Van den Berghe & Vincke, 2011).

For the LGBTQ Community, our places of mourning and celebration often overlap.



Toronto 519 Community Centre:
Grassroots Vigil to Pulse Victims
on the Outside, Queer Ballroom
Dance Lessons on the Inside

Historical Wounds, Cultural Trauma & Resiliency



HIV / AIDS Memorial Quilt



Orlando Pulse Shooting Victims

In memory of the 49 Lost

June 12, 2016



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