Editorial

In remembrance of the Orlando Pulse nightclub victims

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For many years, I was a member of Amigas Latinas, an organization that advocated for the rights of the Latina LGBTQ community in Chicago. On the last Sunday of every June, we would sponsor a float in Chicago's annual Gay Pride Parade, hire a DJ, and decorate our ride in wild tropical colors. With salsa, merengue, and hip-hop tunes blaring, we partied down Halsted Avenue. Mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law and other allies joined us, waving to the crowds as Latina queer familia grooved and danced on the deck of our festive float. After Amigas Latinas folded, I stopped participating in pride marches, turned off by the corporatization of the event, with float after float advertising breweries, phone companies, food stores and countless other businesses. This year, however, I felt compelled to march. The slaughter of forty-nine LGBTQ people and allies, 90 percent of them Latinos/as in a night club on June 12, 2016 in Orlando, Florida prompted me to show up. I was driven by a longing for community and an urgency to assert our right to live. A small gesture like marching in solidarity with other queer Latino/a LGBTQ brothers and sisters and honoring the victims seemed like the only thing to do.

Much has been written in the wake of the horrific attack that ended the lives of forty-nine people, injured fifty-three, and traumatized countless others. Archive-It has collected many of the articles, blogs, and poems on a Web archive site.¹ The writings are wide-ranging and capture the plethora of immediate responses sparked by the shootings. Many speculate on the motive of the shooter and how to characterize his actions. Was it a hate crime or a terroristic attack? Did internalized homophobia inspire the killer? How does his history of domestic violence impact this narrative? Some articles caution us against Islamophobia. Others see in the tragedy a renewed impetus to push for gun control. Some take the mainstream media to task for not emphasizing that this attack was specifically directed at

1 <https://archive-it.org/collections/7570>.

Latino/a people in a Latino/a queer space. Several pieces discuss the centrality of gay bars for marginalized LGBTQ people and poignantly lament the rapidly disappearing sites accessible to queers of color.

A few articles contextualize the tragedy in terms of the history of hatred and violence in the US against LGBTQ people of color. They note the heightened xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric in the US during the current political season, or point out that the tragedy is symptomatic of the backlash against LGBTQ communities given recent gains. They point to the increased demonization of transgender people evidenced in the sponsoring of hundreds of bills across the country targeting transgender rights.

Still fewer adopt a transnational Americas framework that focuses on the reality that some of those killed and injured were undocumented Latinos from Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador and other Latin American and Central American countries. They emphasize the particular challenges the families of those victims now face. A number of articles point out that almost half of those murdered were Puerto Rican, and address the fact that many were members of the influx of half a million Puerto Ricans to Orlando in recent years, driven there by a staggering economic crisis precipitated by the island's unresolved colonial status.

What is clear at this point is that simplistic, one-dimensional analyses will not suffice. We need more complex inquiries that focus on the interconnections between these issues and elucidate the nature of interlocking oppressions. We need interventions that offer an intersectional approach that maps out homophobia and transphobia, sexism, racism, colonialism and white supremacy across the Americas. Studies that do not rely on stereotypes like the ones that suggest that Muslim and Latino families are more homophobic than other people because of their heritage, while ignoring the epidemic of gendered violence that occurs in the US on a daily basis among all cultures.

A small step we can take as Latino studies scholars and activists is to use our skills as researchers committed to social justice to make sense of this massacre. Latino studies scholars such as Juana María Rodríguez, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, and José Quiroga have already offered their reflections. I invite you to write your responses and analyses and submit them to our journal as articles or *Vivencias* essays. I look forward to continuing to engage in conversations with Latino studies scholars and activists about this tragedy and its aftermath and to read your analyses in the pages of *Latino Studies* and in other publications.

As in other cities, at this year's Chicago Pride we took time to collectively acknowledge those we had lost.² The parade started with a remembrance of those who perished on June 12. A contingent of Latino/a queers and allies carried large portraits of each of the victims and led the parade. The crowd fell silent as we passed by, recognizing the enormity of the tragedy and its capacity to bring people together.

2 The tribute was presented by *Windy City Times* and ChicagoPride. The designers were Theresa and Mercedes Volpe-Santos and printing by Topweb.

(Photo credit Tracy Baim/Windy City Times)

We must not forget these victims. May they rest in peace.

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

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