



PACIFIC CENTER

6/14/16

Our nation's LGBTQI communities, and especially queer people of color and those who are Latinx, know all too well that there are people who want to kill us and will kill us at the first opportunity they get. Young queer people of color know they are in danger *every* time they walk out the front door, even if it's just to go dancing. This hate crime happened in Orlando, but it could have happened anywhere, even in Berkeley.

I wish that I could say "Never Again," or "Not Here!" But I can't. The history of violence against us, even locally, is deep and lingering. Pacific Center was founded in 1973 in response to a gay-bashing in a local Oakland bar. Ten years ago, one of our therapists was attacked by someone who broke through our front door, intent on harming as many people as possible. Yes, in Berkeley, California. All of us know that anything can happen at any time. We live with that knowledge.

Sadly, we have too much experience in how to respond to hate. But we also know how to rise and hold each other close. This weekend, I kept thinking of something Harvey Milk wrote around a month before his assassination: "If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet shatter every closet door." Over the last couple of days, we have seen people from all walks of life, gay and straight of all ages, take to the streets. Show up. Speak up. Come out. Rise. We are giving each other hope, just like Harvey also implored us to do.

You and I cannot cure hate, but we can help each other heal. Specifically, this is how Pacific Center is responding:

1. Around 600 people a year attend our 15 peer groups. I have asked the peer group facilitators and our staff to welcome *everyone* as we work through this together. **If you need to be with your family of choice, show up at a (no charge) peer group meeting.** Just go to www.pacificcenter.org to find a peer group that fits. You will be welcome. You do not have to face this alone.
2. In collaboration with Alameda Behavioral Healthcare Services, we are starting **a special six-week long grief/trauma group, facilitated by licensed therapists, at no charge.** If you have lost a loved one in Orlando or are deeply affected by the atrocity of this mass murder, please consider joining this therapy group. Email LMonsour@pacificcenter.org for details.
3. If you need someone to talk to, call 510.548.8283 ext 250 and leave a message. **One of our therapists will call you back and help you find the resources you need.** We have compiled a resource guide and have a referral list of therapists and support services throughout Alameda County. Licensed therapists who want to be on the referral list should contact LMonsour@pacificcenter.org
4. **On June 19th, 1-4 pm, Pacific Center is hosting the first of many intergenerational community meetings.** Now is the time to listen and learn. Contact Amitchell@pacificcenter.org for more information.

Finally, we hope you will think about that other famous quote from Harvey, "Ya gotta give 'em hope," and take action, in whatever way you can. My personal commitment is to send this letter to every "community leader" and politician I know and ask them to demand that **Congress reinstitute the federal ban on assault weapons.** I am also sending this letter to the White House to challenge President Obama to not wait upon Congress, and **issue an Executive Order to reinstitute the ban now.** That is how I am going to start my healing process and I hope you will find yours too.

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