



National Latina/o Psychological Association

Asociación Nacional de Psicología Latina

Orgullo Special Interest Group of NLPA Statement on the Orlando Mass Shooting

Today, we, members of the Orgullo Latinx: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Special Interest Group (SIG) of the National Latina/o Psychological Association (NLPA), express our deep sorrow for the tragic and unnecessary loss of lives at Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. We also wish to state that we stand in solidarity with the family, friends, and community members of the injured and killed that night, and know there are no words we can express that will erase the pain they are experiencing.

As we learn more about the victims of this hate crime, it has become evident that many of the victims were members of the Latinx Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community. Thus, this tragedy hits especially close to home for many of us; we've danced the night away at Latinx themed LGBTQ+ nights amongst our chosen families and loved ones and likely would have done so during the NLPA conference in Orlando later this year. What happened in Orlando could've happened to any one of us.

Some of the victims were from mixed status families, or undocumented themselves, and the majority of the victims were of Puerto Rican descent. They may have sought to escape the socio-political and economic crises in their home country in hopes of establishing a life where they could be safer, accepted, and loved for who they are; only to have their "safe space" corrupted with hate and violence that ended their lives. Unfortunately, the attention to these intersecting identities and the fact that this was a hate crime has been shadowed by the focus on terrorism connected to an Islamophobic and Xenophobic discourse.

As more details emerge, we have learned that the assailant was a regular attendee of Pulse nightclub. Details about the assailant's sexuality remain unknown, but bring up deeply rooted feelings amongst us of the pain, rejection, and self-inflicted violence many LGBTQ+ individuals experience in relation to societal and familial oppression, which that night was placed outward. Although the assailant was not of Latinx descent, there are cultural similarities related to *familismo* and religiosity that greatly impact the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. We often want our families to accept us unconditionally but because of the heterosexism and homophobia underlying many cultural traditions, such as conservative and anti-LGBTQ+ religious views, we are often rejected directly and/or through silence and left to build family and community elsewhere.

We must also not be silent on the issue of Xenophobia and Islamophobia brought to light by popular media outlets in their coverage of the shooting. From an intersectional perspective, similar to how LGBTQ+ and Latinx identities are not mutually exclusive,



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neither are being both Latinx and Muslim and/or Muslim and LGBTQ+. Any dialogue of hate and division only serves to further oppress all marginalized communities. Based on the current political discourse against the Muslim community, Islamophobia is an easy tool to derail from the topic of homophobia and gun control. Therefore, we must not allow our sorrow and fear to be used against Muslim people, who are themselves a historically marginalized group in the U.S. also striving for social justice.

Although this tragic hate crime makes clear the dangers facing Latinx and LGBTQ+ communities, we are steadfast in our commitment to stand proud and to continue to fight for the rights and dignities that should unequivocally be afforded to us. This horrendous massacre reminds us once again that we need to take an active stance in challenging the silent culture of accepting the ways homophobia and heterosexism permeate our global Latinx community. Being passive and not taking action only perpetuates the status quo of privilege and oppression. This year alone, conservative and Christian-identified political leaders introduced over 200 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across 22 states. In addition, their influence continues to stall immigration legislation and reform at the expense of many Latinx immigrants.

Now, more than ever, every one of us must make clear our commitment to recognizing the intersections within and among our Latinx communities. The victims of the Pulse nightclub were there that night to celebrate Latinx life and community. In the words of Julio Salgado, *"A Latin night at a gay club is not just a place to dance cumbia and salsa. It's a place for Brown and Black bodies to come together and dance the night away, to try and forget, at least for one evening, about the bullshit that we deal with every single day. Every time we go out and be our full queer selves, there's a fear in the back of our heads that someone will harm us."*

We, members of the *Orgullo* SIG of NLPA, wish to express that the love we share for our Latinx communities--whom we have committed our professional lives to serving--is born from the intersections we live every day. An intersectional experience that comes with grave danger and at any point can cost us our lives. Join us in remembering and celebrating the victims of Orlando, as well as taking a proactive stance as mental health professionals to uplift Latinx LGBTQ+ voices so that future tragedies like this can be avoided.

In solidarity,

Your Orgullo familia¹

¹ In a spirit of transparency, not ownership, we provide the names of the persons who collaboratively crafted this document (in alphabetical order by first surname): Roberto Abreu, Alison Cerezo, Dagoberto Heredia, Laura Minero-Meza, Richard Renfro, and Zully Rivera-Ramos.