

Reflection on the Orlando Massacre

Early Sunday morning, June 12, a lone gunman murdered 49 persons and injured many others at a nightclub in Orlando. For America, it marked the worst mass shooting the country has ever experienced. Besides the family and friends of those killed and wounded, who are obviously dealing with overwhelming grief, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) communities in North America and beyond who have been singled out and traumatized by this act, it immediately reminded me of Canada's "Montreal Massacre."

On December 6, 1989, a lone gunman shot and killed 14 women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Those of female gender were singled out and targeted simply for who they are. It was a chilling reminder to Canadian society of the extreme misogyny that still exists among some in our country. And fortunately, it motivated many to stand up for the dignity, safety and freedom of women in our society.

The Orlando Massacre should motivate us to do the same for LGBTQ persons in the communities in which we live and around the globe. Obviously, the act in Orlando must be utterly condemned. But that is not enough. Obviously, expressions of regret, solidarity and support need to be made to LGBTQ persons and communities. But that is not enough. Just as the Montreal event sensitized us to be more conscious of, and challenging to, instances of violence against women (physical – but also emotional, psychological and spiritual), the Orlando event must sensitize us to be more conscious of, and challenging to, instances of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ communities and persons.

The Orlando Massacre is a sober reminder that all of us are, and should be, affected by what took place. As the poet and Anglican priest, John Donne, so aptly wrote: "Never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

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