

**comments for the DU Silence & Shout for Orlando gathering  
by Thomas Walker, Director, DU LGBTIQA Services**

*Monday, 6/13/16 at @12.30pm at Driscoll Student Center*

Welcome everyone; thank you all for coming on so dreary a day, and thanks to the many who could not be with us in person, but sent their best wishes.

My name is Thomas Walker, and I am the Director of Educational Programs and LGBTIQA Services for the University, with the Center for Multicultural Excellence.

As is too often the case in today's world, we are brought together as OneDU community by pain and loss.

The shooting at the Pulse club in Orlando is no less painful for its distance, or that—so far—we don't know of any direct DU family connection.

But as names of victims begin to emerge, putting faces to lives stolen, DU gathers on our campus to acknowledge, connect, honor and perhaps even rage for better times.

Orlando was by no means the first mass killing in the US, or the world. So that we never forget, there are other markings of dates and other readings of names.

Orlando was not the first mass attack on the US's Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community. That perhaps was the under-investigated and still unsolved arson killing of 32 people at the Upstairs Lounge in New Orleans in 1973.

As a discrete incident, Orlando can also seem more concrete than the ongoing epidemic of individual attacks and murders on LGBT communities, particularly impacting transgender women of color. Two a month and counting so far this year; and that's just known cases.

And, despite what has been mentioned in the press, Orlando also was not the largest mass shooting in US history, that would be Wounded Knee.

The violence is old and wearisome, shocking and yet unsurprising, very real and sadly ongoing. And while terrifying, we must remember that the statistics are not isolated acts; they are human lives snuffed out by patterns of fear, ignorance, finger-pointing and inaction.

These patterns show up in Orlando through:

- greater legislative attention on who can pee where, than on equity and demonstrable threats to public safety.
- a desperate need for blood donors in the wake of such events, while prohibiting this targeted community from giving blood.

- some of our national leaders denouncing such tragedies, yet suddenly unable to speak the names of affected communities, even when they have previously and easily denigrated.
- reducing people to a single identity, even for good intentions, while ignoring intersections, such as that it was Latin night at Pulse, and the bulk of those killed seem to have been queer people of color, specifically Latino.

We in Colorado, at DU, are not new to such patterns, or even to such incidents:

- Aurora Theatre
- Columbine High School
- Sand Creek

To name only a few.

And so we now pause for one minute's silence—roughly one second for every life ended Sunday, and for those otherwise affected by the Orlando shootings, mindful of the sad roll of larger losses to which we add them.

[PAUSE]

Thank you.

Knowing it is not enough to simply look back and regret, we also gather today to look and move forward.

Audre Lord reminded us that “Our silence will not protect us.”

Heeding that wisdom, many campuses and communities, including DU on occasion, end their annual LGBT awareness-raising Day of Silence events with a Night of Noise—a communal scream to fill the void that could erase our LGBTIQ communities, to call attention to our existence, and to rally members and supporters for ongoing work for equity.

Paired with our silent honoring, I'd also like to hold space for those who'd like to share such an equally honest shout of solidarity and whatever else you may be feeling.

You're welcome to remain silent; but for those interest, I will count 1 2 3 and you shout, whatever sound, word or phrase works best for you.

1      2      3 \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

Finally, if we claim or feel any personal or local suffering through all this pain, then we also have a stake in both the problems and the solutions. Sadness is understandable today; but so is frustration, anger and most useful, a desire to do something.

Things don't just magically improve or get better; people intentionally make them so.

And so I challenge each of us not to dwell on the sorrow alone, but on whatever motivates us to outward positive action.

If Sunday morning's or other actions trouble you, I invite you to consider what additional good you will actively DO.

Beyond not being evil, beyond just being "nice" to people, what will you do to model the positive? to interrupt the negative? to increase understanding and to build connections? Not just when it is easy or convenient or popular, but when it is needed. Because it is needed.

So that DU demonstrates more than symbolic outrage and as leaders for the public good, I invite everyone here to take a moment to

- Fill out an action pledge and make it public by posting photo with one of our hashtags
- Take and share some resources available on the table.
- Show your support, and expand your learning, by attending the free Denver Pridefest this weekend at Civic Park. Stop by the DU booth.

If your heart is low, raise up your voice.

If your heart is heavy, lift up your hands.

If your heart is tired, open your eyes,

And know that you need not be silent, still or alone.

In fact, please don't be.

Thank you all for coming today, and for what you'll do from here...

[www.du.edu/pride](http://www.du.edu/pride)

[www.facebook.com/QatDU](http://www.facebook.com/QatDU)

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