



19 Heartbreaking & Hopeful Photos Of The Stonewall Inn Vigil For Orlando

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JUNE 14, 2016, 6:00 AM

Distribyer

R29' STORIES & FILMS

PHOTOGRAPHED
BY EMILY
HOWE.

On Monday night, mourners from New York and around the world came together to honor and memorialize the victims of the [Orlando shooting](#), and remind themselves that "love beats hate."

[Refinery29](#) was at New York's historic Stonewall Inn as hundreds of people turned out to shine a light for the victims of early Sunday morning shooting at Pulse nightclub in Orlando that left 49 dead.

The crowd, packed tightly to hear the community and political leaders who spoke at the vigil, stretched for several city blocks. People leaned on fire escapes, climbed poles, and perched on frighteningly narrow building ledges to watch the vigil. Above the crowd, rainbow flags and transgender banners flew.

Attendees spoke of what the vigil meant to them. "We're really here to say, 'I see you. It's not gone unnoticed, it's not gone unheard,'" said Rosa Scheppers, 27. "It's just a testament that the world over is looking at us," she said.

Her friend Julie Kim, 25, said that she had felt shocked and devastated by the news of the shooting, but seeing the crowds that came to mourn and support each other was a positive

thing. "I think it shows that there's more love than hate," she said. "People are going to stand together as a community to fight for what we believe in."

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At moments, the crowd shifted from sad to angry, to proud and occasionally even funny. Before the speeches, one group of attendees put a spin on an old cry.

"We're here, we're queer!" they yelled. "We're fab-u-lous, don't fuck-with-us!"

But anger at the tragedy simmered just below the surface. While the crowd and speakers demanded answers to issues like gun safety and pushed back against attempts to blame Islam for the attacks, they more than anything demanded recognition for those who had died.

The hour of speeches by politicians and LGBTQ community leaders were interrupted by repeated cries for the leaders to "say their names." As the speeches went on, the cries got louder and angrier, sometimes drowning out the official speaker. At one point, as the chant turned to a repeated demand to "go off script," as the crowd demanded to hear the victims honored.

When the names came, silence reigned.

Click through to see heartbreaking photos of the historic vigil.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

“I identify as a queer person, and the fact that I guess, where it hits — it hits really close to home. [These] should be safe places, and places where you meet friends, you fall in love. And people need to remember that, at the end of the day, I think love wins,” said Stephanie Yim, 25.

Left to right: Connie Lai, 27, Rosa Scheppers, 27, Stephanie Yim, 25, Julie Kim, 25.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

An unidentified man wears badges that say "Stonewall" and "Love Rules." Crowds of people chanted slogans like "love beats hate" or "love wins" as a pushback against the attempt to frighten communities via terror attacks.

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A couple wrapped in a rainbow flag perches on a small fence around a tree for a better look at the podium, where political figures like New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, and LGBTQ community leaders spoke at the vigil.

"Let us do what we did after 9/11," Cuomo said in his speech. "And let us build back a

monument better than ever before. Let us make Stonewall not just a national monument, but an international symbol for all to know."

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"I live in New York City, I've been here since '76. It was important to show myself here, and be part of this," Chris Ofner, 63, said about why he had come to the vigil. "With the rest of the community."

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

“We’re flaggers,” said Ofner. “Flagging is — was an integral part of the gay community, and then a lot of the people who did it died of AIDS. We’re trying to bring it back.”

Ofner's friend Jeff Hettinger, 52, described how flagging memorialized those he's cared for and lost. “[I've] lost many many many friends who did this art,” he said. “So, when we flag, we tend to be in a place of remembering those we’ve lost, and honoring their commitment to life that they had and hopefully, reintegrating our own commitment to life.”

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

An attendee of the vigil holds up a handmade sign that reads, "love not hate" together with a rainbow flag.

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A member of the crowd waves the pink, blue, and white transgender flag as the New York State flag, the American flag, and the rainbow flag fly above.

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Many attendees and speakers denounced calls to blame Islam for the actions of the shooter, who declared his allegiance to terrorist groups in a 911 call on the night of the attack.

"I am both Muslim and queer gender non-conforming," said one speaker from the Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity. "I'm also a refugee who came to the United States for safety and to find refuge. But I came here to fight hate and discrimination for every identity that I held and that I embodied."

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

As the sun went down, the speeches wrapped up, and the speakers individually came back onto the stage carrying candles. As they read the names of the 48 identified victims, the crowd bowed their heads and quietly raised lighters, iPhones, or candles.

As those killed were honored, the crowd said the Spanish acknowledgement, "presento," after each name.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

“Something like this is going to go on for days. It’s not something that we’re going to get over with overnight. This is something that’s going to stay with us for the rest of our lives. So I think this is something that’s important for both of us, and for you as well, to be a part of this history. That’s how I feel. Like we made history today,” said Aaron Huertas.

"Every name that they said, I cried," he said. "Because that was my heritage. I’m Latino. So that really hit home.”

Left: Nector Santiago, 36. Right, Aaron Huertas, 35.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY HOWE.

A member of the crowd with her face painted to show the LGBTQ community's rainbow flag.

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Two supporters hold up flowers and signs outside the Stonewall Inn.

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Some members of the Muslim community present said it was important to them to show that they stood with the LGBTQ community.

"I came to show my solidarity with the LGBT community, said Lina Hashem, 34. "They've showed so much support for the Muslim community against Islamophobia, and I wanted to let them know that we're here with them and this has nothing to do with Islam. This was a hate crime, and we felt the pain just as much as everyone else."

Zarqa Nawaz, 48, is Canadian, but when she heard about the Orlando shooting while traveling in the United States, she felt she had to come to the vigil. "If there was ever a reason to throw us under the bus it would be now," after the shooting, she said. "And they did not do that, and it

means so much to the Muslim community. I think it's going to open up a lot of eyes and hearts and minds," she said.

Left to right: Zarqa Nawaz, 48, Ghazala Irshad, 32, Lina Hashem, 34.

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I am here firstly as an American, but also as a Muslim," said Ghazala Irshad, 32. "Because even though, yes, I'm not visible [as a Muslim], I want to show that I do support the LGBT community and I recognize their struggles as interconnected with the Muslim struggle. Just like all marginalized communities, we are all interconnected, necessarily, and we need to fight the common enemy of imperialism, patriarchy, etc., together."

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