

## POLITICS AS USUAL: An Act of Hate

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

This is not the column I wrote for this week.

I simply could not submit it.

Why? Because this week, a political column speaking about local issues, local problems, seems inappropriate, even vulgar, in the face of the horrors that have befallen the community of Orlando, Florida. In the midst of Pride Week, a celebration of diversity, of unity, of acceptance we are faced once again with a staggering display of everything that Pride week is not.

Where there should be joy we have unfathomable pain, where we should have happiness we have the agony which hatred has wrought.

We have been forced to endure yet another horrific event, another mass shooting, another colossal loss of innocent life. We are witness to yet another manifestation of evil and hatred visited upon a community that has already endured much.

There is nothing to do but weep.

Please do not talk about religion. This has nothing to do with anyone's religious beliefs. Religion is not about murder. Yes, different religions have different precepts and prohibitions when it comes to tolerance for ? or not ? homosexuality. And yes, a number of religions view it as a sin. However, NONE, no religion requires adherents to KILL homosexuals.

So, do not blame this act of hate and terror on religion.

Hatred and intolerance live in the hearts and minds of individuals and in this case one disturbed, violent and angry individual. His fellow mosque-goers are not to blame for his actions. Nor are the 1 billion plus adherents to the Islamic faith.

He alone is to blame.

As this tragedy has occurred in the midst of one of the most acrimonious presidential campaigns in recent history, there is no doubt that it will be framed within the context of the dominant narrative of the candidates. There will be and has already been some truly appalling political posturing.

One in particular stands out for its ugliness. To seek and take credit for ?calling this? (and by this one presumes Trump means the massacre) is simply beyond the pale. Gloating, bizarre self-congratulation in the midst of all this pain is disgusting. There is no other word for it.

But there will also be platitudes.

Talk and more talk about the need for gun control. We don't need sermons. We need concrete, collaborative action. The fact that the assault weapon was purchased legally by someone who has been investigated by the FBI twice ? twice! ? and is on a no fly list is incomprehensible.

To borrow a line from Hillary Clinton, if you can't get on a plane then you shouldn't be able to buy a gun. No one's ?right? to bear arms will be impinged if a person on a terror watch list is prohibited from buying an assault weapon.

Regardless of the speeches, regardless of the vigils, regardless of the endless back and forth about terrorism, immigration and religious tolerance, in the end, there will still be 49 people dead and just as many severely injured, many with devastating injuries that will affect them for the rest of their lives. And an entire nation, indeed nations, changed forever.

Sandyhook. San Bernadino. Orlando. Will there be another community added to this list? Or will action be taken ? finally ? to deal with the scourge of home grown terrorists.

I hope, and pray, that it is the latter.