

ORLANDO – Liz O'Donnell June 14th, 2016

I am struggling to find the kind of space in my heart that allows love to regenerate when anger, revenge, and despair have claimed possession. I know from experience that revenge is the shortest lived of those emotions for me and that anger has an energy that propels to me to stand up for change. But despair...despair is a bastard. Despair climbs into the cellular habit of the skin infiltrating the very basement upon which the body's protection is built, this rupture of foundation a spiral fracture that ultimately torques well into the soul.

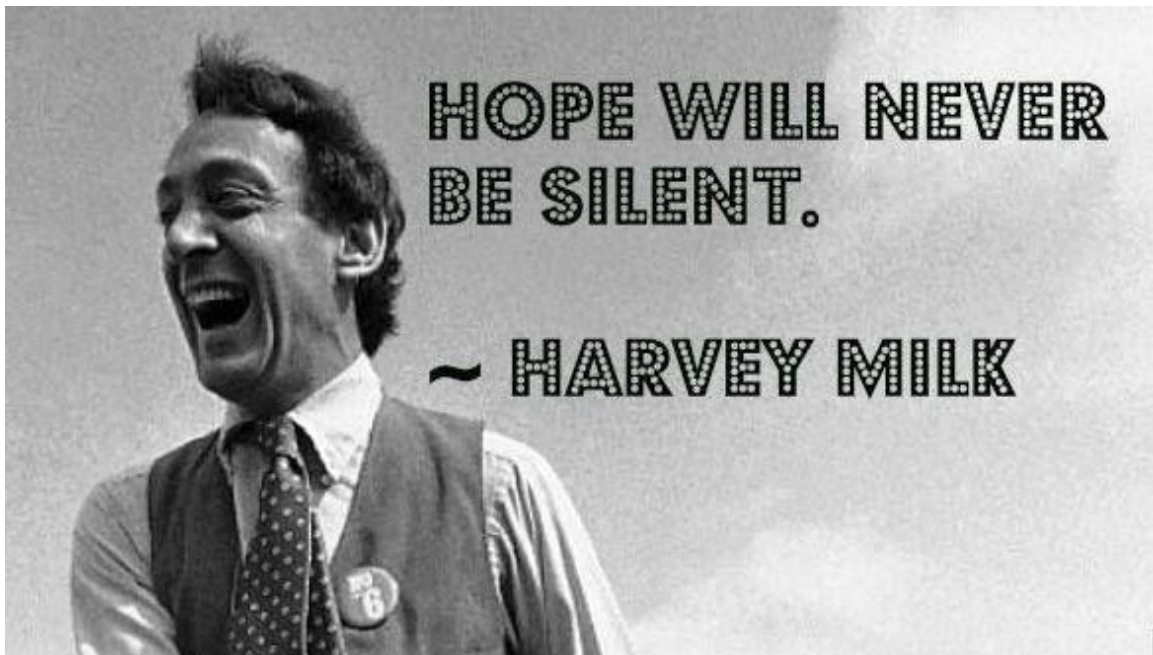
What happened in Orlando, a murderous juxtaposition between illusion and truth, seems to be the interminable story of our wish for one thing while we live another – Disney meets Kafka, or maybe Disney is Kafka? America, the country that I came to looking for an empty page upon which to write my story - the anything is possible trope that has us all now reeling from the impossible. How are we to match the mind's eye with what the body tells us we must believe? Death doesn't happen between dance tracks, but apparently it does. Just like it rains down in the name of religion, or as a deflection from the things we cannot bear to see in ourselves. That tepid description hardly seems worth mentioning because the kind of weight the historical rejection of our own humanity requires, is simply too big to pick up.

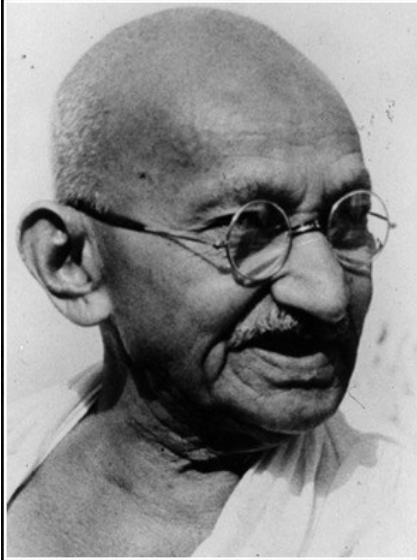
And yet we must pick it up!! This was a direct hit on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. It was by no means the first or even the worst hit, HIV/AIDS has that privilege, but it was linear; a straight line that has been focused on its target since the target had a name. Every word, phrase, exclusionary law, has set the groundwork for homophobia and transphobia to flourish. How dare we believe that we have the right to prevent any human being from filling their lungs with clean air, and yet it happens everyday, everywhere!

Every death is perhaps in its own way wretched, although not every death senseless, untimely, or barbaric. Forty nine innocent lives were lost and we are still possibly counting...these are their names: Stanley Almodovar, Amanda Alvear, Oscar A Aracena-Montero, Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, Antonio Davon Brown, Darryl Roman Burt II, Angel L. Candelario-Padro, Juan Chevez-Martinez, Luis Daniel Conde, Cory James Connell, Tevin Eugene Crosby, Deonka Deidra Drayton, Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, Leroy Valentin Fernandez, Mercedes Marisol Flores, Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz, Juan Ramon Guerrero, Paul Terrell Henry, Frank Hernandez, Miguel Angel Honorato, Javier Jorge-Reyes, Jason Benjamin Josaphat, Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, Anthony Luis Laureanodisla, Christopher Andrew Leinonen, Alejandro Barrios Martinez, Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, Kimberly Morris, Akyra Monet Murray, Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez, Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, Joel Rayon Paniagua, Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, Enrique L. Rios, Jr., Jean C. Nives Rodriguez, Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, Yilmary Rodriguez Solivan, Edward Sotomayor Jr., Shane Evan Tomlinson, Martin Benitez Torres, Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega, Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, Luis S.

Vielma, Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, Jerald Arthur Wright.

Please read them, speak, them, read them again. They are your children, your parents, your siblings, and your friends. They are you, they are me, we are them. I am still looking for the thread left dangling when this United States tapestry started to unravel, and it was well before June 12, 2016. We are dangerously small as lone voices and when we make noise we run the risk of being silenced, but what is the alternative? So I will get up, rise up, speak up, and pick up...my love is bigger than those who will judge me – just look at the voices that have brought about change.





Cowardice is impotence worse than violence. The coward desires revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, maybe to the government of the day, to do the work of defense for him. A coward is less than a man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women.

— *Mahatma Gandhi* —

AZ QUOTES

“With guns,
you can kill
terrorists.
With education
you can kill
terrorism.”

– Malala Yousafzai



**We must learn to live together as brothers
or we will perish together as fools.**

Martin Luther King



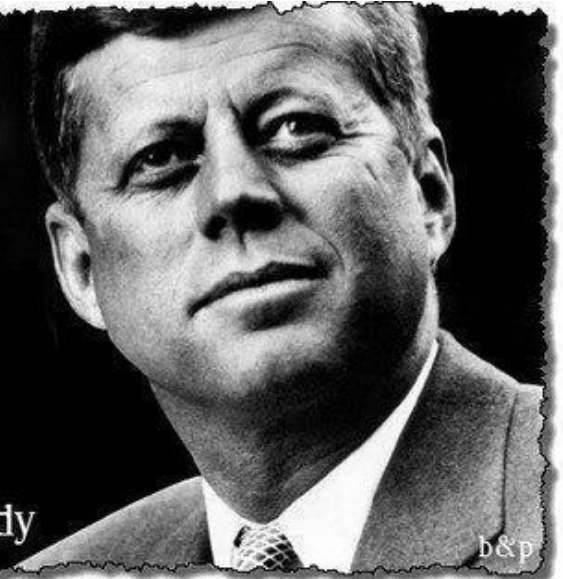
The gay rights movement is not a party. It is not a lifestyle. It is not a hair style. It is not a fad or a fringe or a sickness. It is not about sin or salvation. The gay rights movement is an integral part of the American promise of freedom.

— *Urvashi Vaid* —

AZ QUOTES

Those who make
peaceful revolution
impossible, make
violent revolution
inevitable.

John F. Kennedy



b&p

**“NO ONE IS BORN HATING ANOTHER PERSON
BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN, OR HIS
BACKGROUND, OR HIS RELIGION. PEOPLE MUST
LEARN TO HATE, AND IF THEY CAN LEARN TO
HATE, THEY CAN BE TAUGHT TO LOVE, FOR LOVE
COMES MORE NATURALLY TO THE HUMAN HEART
THAN ITS OPPOSITE.”**



-NELSON MANDELA



*Silence in the
face of evil is
itself evil: God
will not hold us
guiltless. Not
to speak is to
speak. Not to
act is to act.*

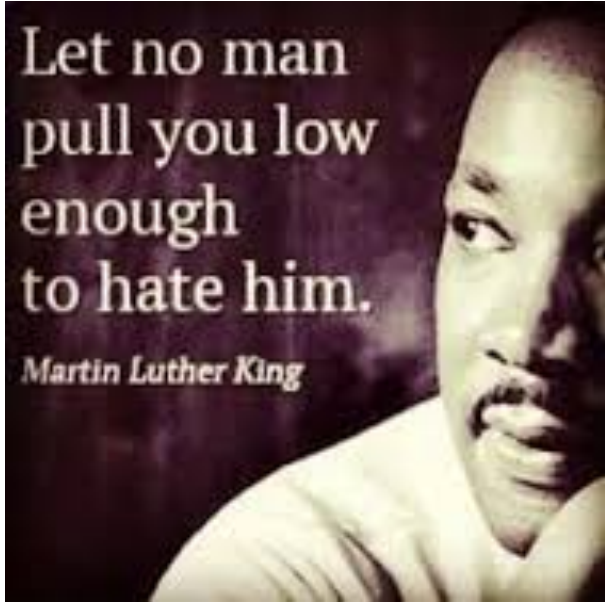
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer



**I would like to be known as
a person who is concerned
about freedom and
equality and justice
and prosperity for
all people.**

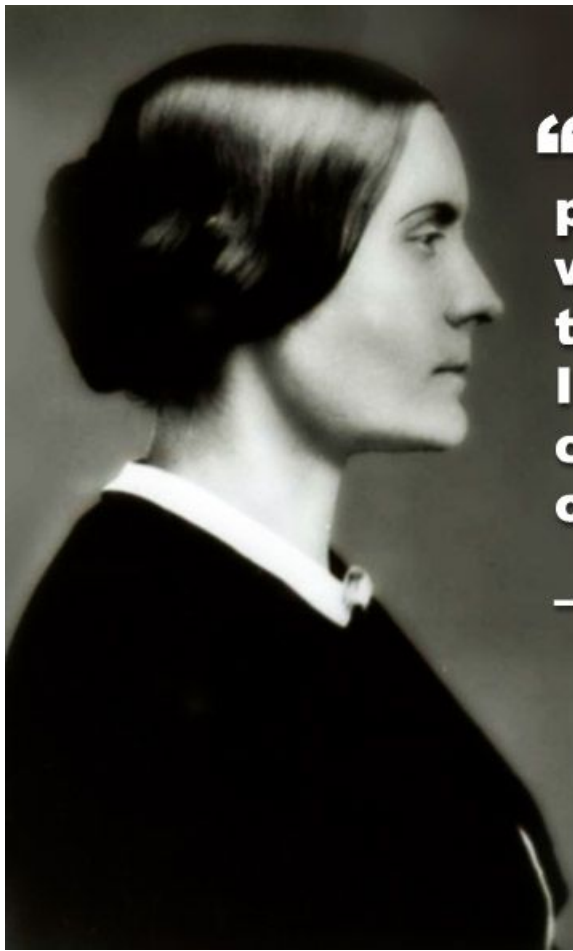
Rosa Parks



A close-up portrait of Martin Luther King Jr. looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is dark and textured.

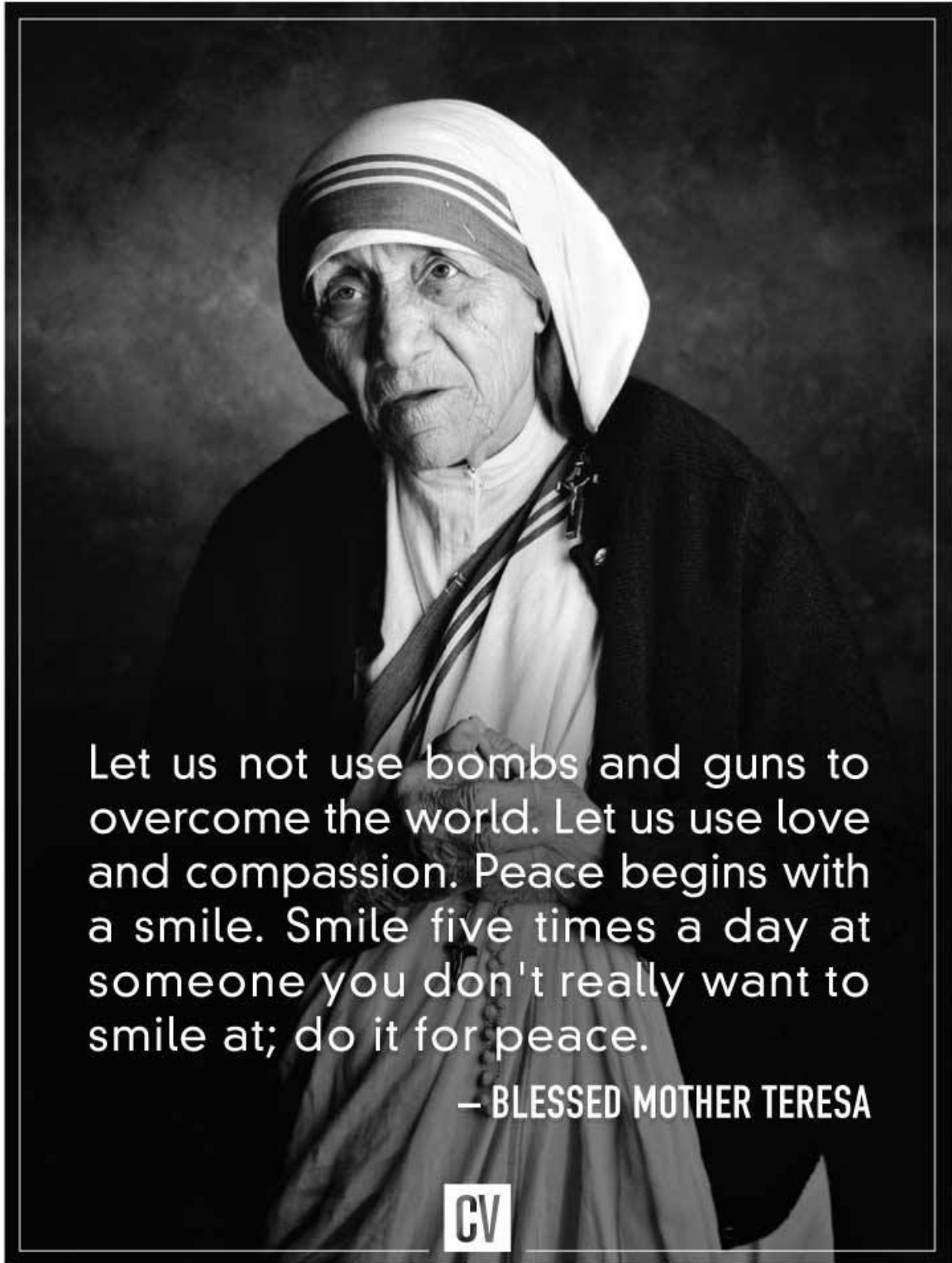
Let no man
pull you low
enough
to hate him.

Martin Luther King

A black and white profile portrait of Susan B. Anthony, facing right. She has her hair styled in a bun and is wearing a dark dress with a white collar.

**“ I distrust those
people who know so
well what God wants
them to do, because
I notice it always
coincides with their
own desires. ”**

– Susan B. Anthony



Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world. Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at; do it for peace.

— BLESSED MOTHER TERESA

CV

“Christopher is Orlando’s child – I gave birth to him but now he is Orlando’s adopted son” mother of Christopher Andrew Leinonen who died in Pulse Nightclub 6/12/2016.

