

Statement on the Colorado Springs Tragedy

I'm devastated. Again. Good gracious, not AGAIN. Sunday morning, many of my queer family woke up to the news out of Colorado Springs, CO, that a gunman had attacked Club Q, an LGBTQ nightclub. 5 dead. 25 injured. Countless additional lives destroyed in a matter of moments. You see, there's something special about queer clubs. It's OUR space. These are places where we often first find the truth. The authenticity. The real happiness we've never fully allowed ourselves to feel before. I remember going to my first LGBTQ+ club in Michigan as a sophomore in college. It transformed my life forever. I saw my first drag show there. I fell deeper in love there. I got to hold my girlfriend and dance in public with a woman for the first time there. I became enthralled with our drag scene there. So, what happened at Pulse Nightclub 6 years ago, and now Club Q, is a violation of the most degrading and intentionally vicious variety. In a society where you fear for your life most days, an act of this magnitude is meant to effectually remove any attempt you have made at making a safe haven for yourself and your loved ones. It's meant to shake us to the core and, for me, that's exactly what it has done.

At times like these, we need to lean on our family, chosen and otherwise. And that's what we'll do at the University of Rhode Island. Our Gender and Sexuality Center is planning two events for our community and allies to come together. First, we invite you to join us for a Vigil and Gathering for Club Q, taking place on zoom tomorrow evening, Tuesday, November 22nd at 8pm. Simply click this link to join: <https://uri-edu.zoom.us/j/98080691695?pwd=T3VDQTFFaaFYyS0s2VmFWaEpyRlJhdz09>. Kyle Parker, a trans and queer Buddhist monk, will be joining us for this event focused on recognizing the victims and being in community together to share our feelings. We will also share resources and what you can do to act. Next, on Monday, November 28th at noon, we will host a Vigil and Rally for Club Q on the Quad. If you're interested in speaking at this event, please contact me at annierussell@uri.edu for more details.

Please know that we are here for you. If you need to speak with someone privately, we are more than happy to help. Just reach out. If you just need to be in safe space, our center is open and here for you. If you need more long-term care, we have counseling and psychological services right here on campus. As we prepare to go into the Thanksgiving holiday, this particularly makes me feel scared, sad, angry, and uneasy. But it also makes me feel resolved. Resolved to make a bigger difference, whenever and however I can. I intend to hold onto the latter thought as I process my own feelings, as well. Above all, family, be safe, be well, be kind to one another, and share your love openly – we'll keep changing the world one step at a time; it's all we've ever known.

In Love and Solidarity,

Dr. Annie Russell
Director, Gender and Sexuality Center, University of Rhode Island