

Statement on the May 14, 2022 Tops Friendly Market Shooting

Dr. Dean Kilpatrick, Director

Dear Friends,

I am certain that each of you shares the sense of shock, anger and despair that my team at the National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center (NMVVRC) felt on Saturday when we learned of the mass shooting at the Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, NY. We've heard from our Center's stakeholders, survivors of previous mass violence crimes, and others about their personal anguish and feelings of helplessness over the past 48 hours.

I believe it is critically important that we put *names* to what occurred on Saturday, and to other horrific acts of mass violence we've all witnessed previously over the past decade.

First and foremost, **we name and honor the lives of those who were murdered:**

Celestine Chaney
Roberta A. Drury
Katherine Massey
Andre Mackneil
Margus D. Morrison
Heyward Patterson
Aaron Salter
Geraldine Talley
Ruth Whitfield
Pearl Young

While their precious lives were brutally cut short, their personal legacies and the love they evoke from their family and friends, the community of Buffalo, and our entire Nation will live on forever. We also honor all those who were physically or emotionally injured by this heinous attack.

Next, **we must name this horrific crime** for what it is: **"A hate crime and an act of racially-motivated violent extremism"** (*Attorney General Merrick Garland, May 14, 2022*). The intent of mass crimes of this horrific nature is to not only inflict grievous death and destruction on the place where it occurs; but to terrorize an entire group of people who share with the victims the same race, ethnicity, faith or religion, or other targeted status. Thus, the "scene of the crime" becomes the lives of an entire group of people and our Nation as a whole, with its impact felt across America and around the world.

Sadly, our community of Charleston, SC, was devastated on June 17, 2015, by the massacre at the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church that killed nine Black Americans who were attending Bible study. This racially motivated hate crime was perpetrated by a White supremacist who targeted the church because of its history and eminence in the Black community. Yet, thankfully, the NMVVR – with support from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime – has been honored to help communities that, like Buffalo, Charleston, and many others, have endured *mass violence crimes* that share the frightening motivations of racism, bigotry, and sheer hate; among them:

- The deadliest attack on Latinos ever in America, the mass shooting at the El Paso Walmart on August 3, 2019, that killed 23 people and physically injured 23 others, was allegedly orchestrated by a man who posted a lengthy manifesto online, featuring anti-immigrant and white nationalist themes.
- The mass shooting at the Gilroy Garlic Festival on July 28, 2019, that killed three people and physically wounded 17 others was perpetrated by a murderer whose online complaints, among many, were about the “hordes of mestizos” congesting the Festival.
- The mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, on October 27, 2018, that killed 11 people and physically wounded six others was allegedly perpetrated by an evil man who had posted numerous anti-Semitic rants across social media platforms.
- The mass shooting at the Pulse Nightclub, a beloved social hub for the LGBTQI community in Orlando on June 12, 2016, was committed by a domestic terrorist with a history of hate and intimate partner violence, resulting in 50 deaths and 50 victims who were physically injured.
- The large-scale criminally-negligent water crisis in Flint, MI, that began in 2014 and reverberates today – in a community that is 57 percent Black – resulted in Flint’s water being contaminated with lead and Legionnaire’s Disease that left thousands (including many children) exposed to chronic toxins, and that resulted in many deaths.
- The mass shooting at the Sikh Gurdwara in Oak Creek, WI, on August 5, 2012, killed seven members of this Faith community and physically wounded four others. The perpetrator was an avowed white supremacist.

Third, we must **name and be prepared to address the consequences of these mass violence crimes** in a manner that is collaborative, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed. The impact of mass violence crimes extends far beyond the direct victims and survivors. The reality is that the ripple effects of mass violence extend to many others, including first responders, health care providers, justice and victim services professionals, and leaders and members of the community in which the crime occurred. NMVVR surveys reveal elevated rates of PTSD and depression among adults in communities affected by mass violence years after the incidents.

Other consequences include fears of becoming victims of mass violence in the future, as well as fears for their children, loved ones, and other members of their community. Another enduring consequence that we have witnessed over the past 48-hours is *increased re-traumatization among those who have previously experienced a mass violence crime*. The ripple effects of each new crime of mass violence are powerful and create service needs that extend to many people, in many communities across the nation.

Finally, we must individually and collectively **name the sources of this specific scourge of mass violence and other violent crimes**, which I think has at its core, *fear*. Franklin Roosevelt once famously said that *“the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”* He was right. Fear drives hate. In particular, the fear that others are taking our rightful place and negatively affecting our lives is something we need to be very afraid of and do our best to combat with all our might. It is this kind of fear that can stoke feelings of superiority to, and hatred of, those who seem different from us and whom we fear are taking away our opportunities and futures. This type of fear can be deadly because, if encouraged or condoned, it can dehumanize others who are not like us, cause hatred, and justify violence. We will never rid ourselves of this type of mass violence until we name this for what it is and actively address the proliferation of far too many platforms that allow violent, fringe ideas to be amplified to the point that they become mainstream.

We have the power to conclude – publicly, privately and in unison – that these fears, beliefs and actions are despicable, unacceptable, and an affront to our nation and to our world.

And on a daily basis at the NMVRC, we witness with gratitude the power of people and communities who rise together – again and again – to support and serve mass violence victims, survivors and their communities.

Sincerely,

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Director
National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center



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