

NJSBA President's Statement to the NJSBA Board of Trustees Honoring the Orlando Victims and Recognizing the Anti-Bullying Work of the State Bar Foundation

Please join me as we observe a moment of silence in honor of the victims of the Orlando massacre this past week. There are so many victims among the innocents killed, the families and friends left behind, and those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and Latino communities who live in greater fear, worried about whether their status as minorities leaves them more susceptible to brutality, hate, assault or murder.

In this moment, it is even more poignant that I stand before you as the first openly gay president in the 118-year history of this association, having previously offered a vision for the year ahead that promotes inclusion, diversity, access to justice, and the beautiful ideal of equality that, at its heart, recognizes the dignity of the individual. I recommit myself and this association to that vision.

Out of this horrible, senseless tragedy, I have seen my people come together in a beautiful way and grow stronger amidst their shared pain. I have also felt the compassion and the empathy of so many who are not in the LGBT or Latino communities as they offer acceptance and love. Thank you.

I am heartened by, and, in this moment, honor the incredible work of our own New Jersey State Bar Foundation in combatting bullying. For over 25 years, the foundation staff has worked tirelessly to interrupt the debilitating attacking on the individual's psyche and dignity inflicted by the terrible message that says there is something wrong with you, that you are less of a person, that you are not equal, and that you deserve to be attacked and killed. We rededicate ourselves to that work in honor of the victims in Orlando and elsewhere. Together we can work to change the course of our shared destiny toward a better, more peaceful and more just world where everyone can live freely and openly.