

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes June 14, 2016

Present: Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue), Chris Huffine (Allies in Change), Katherine Stansbury (Eastside Concern), Linda Castaneda (Castaneda Counseling), Marlie Goocey (Clackamas Women's Services), Rachel Paris (ARMS), Ellen Radovic (Multnomah County Court), Shannon Barkley (Clackamas County Parole and Probation), Karla Upton (Multnomah County DCJ DV Unit), Guadalupe Aragon (Cedar Counseling Center), Kate Sackett (Portland State University), Guruseva Mason, Rachel Smith (Portland State University), Michael Davis (Eastside Concern), Alison Dunfee (Pathfinders of Oregon)

Minutes by Kate Sackett, edited by Chris Huffine

Orlando shooting spree discussion

The group took a few minutes to discuss the mass shooting at the gay nightclub in Orlando which killed 49 people plus the shooter and wounded over 50 others. This was the most serious mass shooting in modern times in the U.S. as well as a hate crime targeting the LGBTQ community. The killer had done some prior checking out of gay clubs and websites -- what's not clear is whether he was doing that as preparation to attack or out of genuine interest/curiosity. He had prior contact with this club, some of the patrons recognized him, so internalized homophobia may have played a part but that is not yet clear.

Constant repetition of "the worst" -- treating it that way sets it up as the Olympics of mass killing, setting up someone else to top it. The actual statement is more narrow than it ends up sounding -- it's the worst mass *shooting*, less than some other things. Looking at violence in that way leaves out the daily violence (e.g., African American men killed or wounded over the last year, if we're going to do comparisons how many women and men have been hurt by their partners in the past year?) Those statistics get further marginalized because that's our daily everyday violence, it doesn't matter in the press b/c it's not a onetime big thing. This becomes about making money for news outlets.

He did have a history of DV according to his first wife. He also had a history of making racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks.

Not so mysterious what drove his behavior, a lot of the same stuff the men have been dealing with in the programs. He had a great deal of emotional pain that he blamed everyone else for, particularly strangers and oppressed groups, targeted women and women in his own life, seemed to have a sense of grandiosity. There are lots of similarities between him and men in the programs.

There's also been a lot of focus on him being Muslim. He's American-born but that gets lost in the stories and also not emphasized that he is male and there is clearly a gender piece to this. This could be viewed as a more extreme form of what we see in our groups everyday.

This could instead be viewed as a more concentrated form rather than extreme: people in groups have perpetrated acts of extreme violence and killing, this is concentrated, rather than a further extreme version.

Another man in the LA-area was also apprehended with firearms heading toward a Pride event in the LA area. That was a prior incident (not inspired by the Orlando shooting), in the process of enacting that, but not getting as much attention.

There also was a shooter who killed a singer in Orlando in the past few days, which had a stronger stalking aspect to it. That person did not know the singer; he was a fan but had no personal connection or relationship with her.

It sparked thoughts about compassion and where do we take the world with this and how the politicians “whirled” it. What would have happened if the shooter’s name was Bill instead of Omar? There have been incredibly aggressive comments and an incredible increase in the media by what politicians are doing with it.

It also sparked a reminder of the Dalai Lama’s comments about killing and violence done in Tibet by the Chinese: people wanted to arm themselves and continue to fight and the Dalai Lama said no, we need to approach these people with compassion and be concerned about the karma they create for themselves with their actions and feel sad for them as well as for the victims. A compassion meditation and mindfulness practice with men in the groups, with comments about where do we go with this in our life: every step we take away from violence is one more positive energy in the world.

One attendee led a compassion exercise in his group the previous night inspired, in part by the Orlando shootings. He guided the men to “have compassion for ourselves as perpetrators of DV, for our victims, for others in the room who are also perpetrators, and again working towards compassion, not only for the victims and their families but also for Omar and his family and for the perpetration of our media and our politicians with the same escalation of the same stuff.” The room got pretty silent doing that meditation in the group, and it was not clear where everyone was in the room with their own thoughts and feelings about LGBTQ, with Omar and that culture. They sat quietly with that, not a whole lot of comments with that, a lot of the work in trying to help people step out of violent activities is one of the most positive things we can do with this.

The media and society at large tends to have a cardboard cut-out of the offender, who is in the background, and the prayers aren’t for him. The question we need to ask as a society is how does somebody end up there, because very few people intend to end up there. It is so important to humanize everyone involved.

NPR newscaster talking about this event kept saying “bombing” instead of “shooting”, bringing up stereotypes about who commits what kinds of acts. Implicit bias and stereotyping came out many times in 5 minutes listening to the radio station, hearing a lot about ISIS and what is happening in Syria and other areas, usually in the context of bombing and here we hear about the

threat of bombs and stereotype all of that. We need to be aware of our own stereotyping when we think about the causes or what was going on in someone's head there.

There is also a macro/micro focus that is important here. This is happening almost exactly a year after the Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage and also in an election season, where the first major political female presumptive nominee in the history of the US is up for president. There is an interesting potential power shift going on in current status of many groups and when that happens this is another example of the backlash that comes following such progress, beyond xenophobia and terrorism.

If current events are brought up in the men's groups, this can be a great teaching opportunity as an example of what they are struggling with. What drove him there is not so different than what drives men into these groups and we can consider this as a teaching opportunity to discuss in parallel.