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PRESS RELEASE

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Today the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations released this statement regarding the recent shooting in Orlando, Florida.

“The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations expresses our most profound sympathies and condolences to the people, their families, friends and communities, whose lives were so brutally ravaged by the recent violence in Orlando.

“The outrageous act of hate violence in Orlando occurred on “Latin Night” at Pulse, a premiere gay club. Most of the victims were people of color, predominantly Latino/a of Puerto Rican descent.

“This tragedy is a harsh and sobering reminder of the continuing need for committing resources to educate and prevent prejudice and violence in all its forms.

“We at the Commission are far too familiar with the pernicious persistence of violent hate crimes targeting members of LGBTQ communities and other groups.

“Our Commission’s annual analysis of hate crime data informs us that homophobic and transphobic hate crimes have historically had a disproportionately high rate of violence. In L.A. County the annual rate of violence for hate crime against this group the last 7 years has been 70% or higher.

<http://www.lahumanrelations.org/hatecrime/hatecrimearchivereports.htm>) Our preliminary analysis for 2015 reveals that anti-gay/lesbian hate crimes have reached their highest level of violence in over a decade, with 82% as violent. And hate crimes against transgender people were 100% violent, as in the previous year.

“This mass shooting in Orlando is an extreme expression of the all too common, everyday homophobic, transphobic, sexist, and racist violence facing gender non-conforming people, especially of color, in the U.S. and around the world.

“However, we know that, together, with deliberate, persistent effort, we can transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace.

“As we work together to eliminate the root causes of hate violence and structural and institutional prejudice, we must ensure that specific incidents of violence are not used to foster fear and encourage discrimination against any group.

“We must not allow the violence in Orlando to lead to increased Islamophobia and further tragedy and loss of innocent life. Following past incidents, anti-Muslim/Middle Eastern hate crime increased by over 1000% in our county. We must remind ourselves and those around us that the actions of one person do not in any way represent the beliefs of the thousands of Muslims who we live and work with each day, and that we need to defend them against those who would act out of anger and ignorance or political convenience to do them harm or deny them basic rights.

“We call on all members of all of our communities to stand against efforts to divide us against one another and to stand against efforts that encourage hate in any form, anywhere, against any individual or group.”

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations is one of the oldest and largest agencies of its kind. In 1944, following the interracial violence of Los Angeles' Zoot Suit Riots, the L.A. County Board of Supervisors created the Committee for Interracial Progress, which later became the Commission. Today, the Commission is working to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace, through its strategic priorities on youth, human relations leadership, fairness and equity in the County's criminal justice systems, and by strengthening hate violence prevention and response. The Commission is part of L.A. County's Department of Community and Senior Services.

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