

Pulse Nightclub Memorial – Orlando Gay Days

The Journey “We” Take

Written by: Christine Van Dyk



The Pulse Memorial and Orlando's Gay Days

When 49 people lost their lives in the Pulse Nightclub shooting, something amazing happened in Orlando. Some might say it was a wake-up call or a shift in our collective consciousness, but to folks in the Sunshine State, it seems to have an awful lot to do with grammar – something that begins and ends with a pronoun.

As we approach the June 12 anniversary of the shootings, the City of Orlando is honoring the compassion that was displayed that night when “they” became “us” and the whole world learned the importance of being “we.” That subtle shift in words taught us the importance of rejecting biases and the danger that comes when we distance ourselves from those outside our own circles. Because the truth is, the Pulse tragedy didn’t just happen to “them,” it happened to us all.

To honor the memory of the victims and support the survivors, Orlando United Day, which comes on the heels of the annual Gay Days celebration, is hosting a number of events and memorials. There is the One Orlando Collection and Digital Gallery, which features items gathered from the memorial site, and the unveiling of the Sea-to-Sea Flag that has become a globally recognized symbol of the LGBTQ movement. At the site of the Pulse nightclub, the community will gather to reflect on the events of that evening while in Lake Eola Park, the world will “Remember Our Angels.” For the latest information, visit the Orlando United Day webpage.

Like the sticker on a rearview mirror says, objects behind us are “closer than they appear.” And so while a year has gone by, and many of the rainbow-colored banners have begun to fade, the

goodwill that the world found in being “us” is closer than ever, and this city we all love to love continues to be #orlandostrong.

The Show Must Go On

Reminding us all that life is equal parts tragedy and celebration, the 27th annual Gay Days celebration will usher in and lead up to the one-year anniversary of the Pulse shootings. As in years past, this unofficial event by Walt Disney World Resorts is the most popular vacation celebration for the LGBTQ community and one that will surely draw high attendance this year.

Visitors can be the first to experience Pandora—the World of AVATAR at Animal Kingdom or take center stage at Disney’s Hollywood Studios. Travel around the world at Epcot, Disney’s land of the future, or explore endless enchantment of the Magic Kingdom Park where everyone can be a kid again. It all happens May 30 through June 5 in theme parks and venues throughout Orlando. Other supporting events for this year’s “Gay Days Circus” theme include exposition halls, the Miss Gay Days contest and plenty of pool parties at resorts across the sunny destination.

Enjoying Better (Gay) Days

Come to Orlando for the Gay Days party or extend your stay to attend the commemorative Pulse events. Take a short drive to the coast or make time for some retail therapy at the upscale The Mall at Millenia, cool off in one of the area’s water parks or let off some steam in the heart-pounding I-Drive NASCAR experience.

But before you pack up and end the excitement, take a moment to visit the Orange County Regional History Center and remember the names that are scribbled across the 49 wooden crosses. Get in your car and make the short drive to pay your respects at the small, unassuming bar that sits wedged between downtown Orlando and the Delaney Park neighborhood. The memories are everywhere, even at the new Orlando City Soccer stadium where, amidst a sea of purple chairs, 49 rainbow-colored seats sit front and center – forever reminding the world of all “we” lost and gained that night.

For an updated schedule and additional information on Pulse events, visit Orlando/Orange County’s Orlando United webpage.

For more information and schedules for Gay Days events, go to [GayDays.com](#)