

The Purple Crown by Rollin Russell

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The slaughter of innocents at the Pulse night club in Orlando, FL reminded many of the murder of Bible study participants at Emmanuel AME Church just one year ago. The circumstances of the two atrocities were very different but the fundamental act is the same: a hate filled person slaughtered unresisting victims because they were Black or LGBT.

Christians since the third century have called martyrdoms like the one at Mother Emmanuel the Purple Crown. It applies to Orlando as well. The term was first used during the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Valerian, and it has been honored by the pacifist traditions, many of whose faithful were martyred during the Middle Ages and the Reformation.

In his book, *The Purple Crown*, Tripp York contends that we need only look to the martyrs to see the most heinous evil in any age or society: it is the one that makes martyrs of its saints. The partiers at Pulse were not saints by any traditional definition, but they were martyrs of a life style non-the-less.

We now see racism and homophobia unmasked in all their stark hideousness. The only appropriate response to new insight is new action. If we seize his second moment of clarity, and if we use it to make changes in the way we think and live, we might eventually be able to say, as Joseph did to his brothers in Egypt, "You meant it to me for evil, but God has turned it to good."

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