

Oral Memoirs
of
Emmanuel J. Agon Kresky

An Interview Conducted by

Sarah Schneider

November 17, 2016

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories
(RICHERS) of Central Florida

University of Central Florida RICHERS of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewers: Sarah Schneider

Transcriber: Geoffrey Cravero

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of RICHES of Central Florida, History Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Emmanuel J. Agon Kresky is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on November 17, 2016.

Abstract

An oral history interview of Emmanuel J. Agon Kresky, a member of the Orlando Gay Chorus. The interview was conducted by Sarah Schneider at the University of Central Florida Center for Emerging Media in Orlando, Florida, on November 17th, 2016. Some of the topics covered include joining the Orlando Gay Chorus, his favorite productions, the 2012 and 2016 Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses festivals, the mass shooting at Pulse nightclub, the Orlando Gay Chorus's response to the Pulse tragedy, the community, national and international responses to the Pulse tragedy, the significance of Pulse before and after the tragedy, the role of social media in the aftermath of the tragedy, and the long-term consequences of the tragedy.

Emmanuel J. Agon Kresky

Oral History Memoir

Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Sarah Schneider

November 17, 2016

Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

Joining the Orlando Gay Chorus and favorite productions

Schneider [beep] Today is Thursday, November 17th, 2016. My name is Sarah Schneider and I am conducting an oral history interview with Manny [Emmanuel J.] Agon Kresky of the Orlando Gay Chorus. The interview is being conducted at the UCF [University of Central Florida] Center for Emerging Media in Orlando, Florida.

So thank you for being here today.

Kresky Mmhmm.

Schneider And can you start off by telling us your name please?

Kresky Sure. Um, my – my full name is Emmanuel. Emmanuel J. Agon Kresky.

Schneider Thank you. And to start off, can you tell us where were you born and how long have you lived in Orlando?

Kresky Um, I was born in South Florida. I was born – born in Hollywood, um – Hollywood, Florida. My parents lived in Dania Beach[, Florida]. Um, grew up in South Florida and went to college in [Washington,] D.C. After college, I went back to South Florida. And then moved to Orlando[, Florida] in, um, maybe 1998 or so. 1998 or 1999.

Schneider Okay. And how long have you been a part of the Orlando Gay Chorus?

Kresky Since, um, early 2000s. So maybe like 2003. I'd have to double check, but I think around 2002, 2003.

Schneider And what brought you to join the chorus?

Kresky [laughs] Um, let's see. I had – I had sung with, um, Candlelight – uh, the Candlelight, uh, Processional over at Epcot. I sang with cast choir there. And after performing with Disney, I kind of wanted to continue singing after the

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holidays. And I had attended one or two OGC¹ concerts. And, um, I auditioned after maybe the second time seeing them perform.

Schenider Okay. And, um, can you tell us about some of your favorite productions or...

Kresky [laughs].

Schneider ...performances you had?

Kresky Um, sure. So the – the – the holiday concerts always[sic] the most popular ones. The ones that people get, uh, most excited about. Um, I think my personal favorite was the one that had the format of a radio show. And so there was an MC² and, um, it was like a broadcasted concert. It was like a, um – it was – it was more structured. Um, it was a more structured concert.

Another one that I – that – that sticks out in my mind was one of the earlier ones. And it was called, um, “From Sissies to Superstars”. And it told the story of Oliver Button. I think that was his name. Oliver Button. And, um, it told of a story of a – of a – of a kid who was a little different. Um, and how he navigated through some challenges in his life.

0:02:51

Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses festival

Schneider Mm. Um, and have you participated in the GALA³ events?

Kresky Yes. I go – for whatever reason, I did not go to the ones that were actually closer to home. So there’s one in Tampa[, Florida] and there was one in Miami[, Florida]. Uh, I didn’t go to those. Um, my first GALA festival was in Denver in 2012. And we returned this year, um, to – to Denver for the 2016 festival.

Schneider So you – you have – you’ve been there twice for GALA events.

Kresky Yes.

Schneider [inaudible].

Kresky Yes. Even though I have been in the chorus for longer, for whatever reason I, um, did not join the rest of the chorus members by doing the festival up until 2012.

Schneider Mmhmm. And, um, what has your experience at the GALA events be[sic] like – been like? Can you tell me a little bit more about what that event is like?

¹ Orlando Gay Chorus

² Master of Ceremonies

³ Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses

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Kresky 2012 and 2016 were very different. Um, and a big part of that was because of Pulse⁴. Um, it was just very, eh—eh, [sighs]—it was—it was affirming. It was humbling. Um, there were—there were just a lot of random people who’d come up to us. And because they knew that we were from Orlando, they would give us words of encouragement. They would hug us. Um, they would thank us for coming. Um, it was just very—very humbling.

Um, 2012, being that it was my first GALA, was a different experience, where it was like, “Oh, my god. I can’t believe this is my first year coming. I don’t know why I didn’t go to the one in Tampa. I don’t know why I didn’t go to the one in Miami.” Um, we did a great set. It was just very uplifting to be surrounded by so many likeminded people. And i—in 2012, it was just a more joyous celeb—celebratory kind of feel to it. It was also when I started dating Nick [Nicholas Agon Kresky]. So, um, that will always have a very, um, you know—an important, uh, piece of my heart. Uh, 2012.

But, yeah. Two very different experiences. Uh, both great experiences. Just very different.

0:05:12

Mass shooting at Pulse nightclub

Schneider Um, and so, getting to Pulse, um, can you tell us how you first heard about what happened?

Kresky Yeah. So, um, I guess it was Sunday morning. Um, I—Nick had already gone—Nick, my husband, had already gone to work at Universal [Studios Florida]. We were having some work done upstairs in our house, so we were sleeping downstairs. For whatever reason, I checked my iPhone from work. Um, I don’t always do that on the weekends. Um, but for whatever reason, I did. I hope my boss isn’t watching this because I—I check my iPhone all the time [inaudible] [laughs]. Um, so i—the—for whatever reason, I—I—I scroll through, uh, my messages. And I work for an online travel agency. And there was a message from one of our operational, um, departments—is—mi—mentioning that there was an incident. And, um, they were trying to ascertain whether or not any of the travelers that booked through our website were impacted by it.

And so be—this was before we knew the extent of it. We knew that there was a shooting. We didn’t know that—how many people were injured. How many people were dead. Um, and then—so, um, I read it. I didn’t—again, not knowing that it was a terrorist or it’s somebody who is mentally disturbed, um, I—I knew that the operations people were looking, um—looking into it.

Um, I didn’t think that anyone that I—I knew would have been at the club at the time of the day—or time of night. Um, and then—so I think I sent out a few

⁴ 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting

emails to my hotel partners saying, “Hey. Um, I heard there was a shooting. I hope every – all of your guests are okay.” And then I – I didn’t really put that much thought into it.

Um, later that same morning, I started getting texts and Facebook messages from – from my friends outside of Florida asking if I was alright. And, um, you know, wishing that I was safe. And, um, telling like that they hope I’m doing well. And just – you’re kind of like awestruck. It’s like I – why is this happening [laughs]? Like who – uh, why are people reaching out? Again, not knowing the extent of how many people lost their lives. How many were injured at, um – at Pulse.

Eh, gr – I grew up in South Florida. Went to school in [Washington,] D.C. So, sad to say, shootings were not unheard of. And so, again, not realizing the extent of the damage that was done to the patrons that were there. Um, to the community. Just mindboggling. And then, um, you know, I started watching the news. The – you know, it’s hard to go back to sleep. Right? So you [laughs] – you watch the news. And then, um, just kept the TV on. And then, you know, more messages, um, about what’s going on.

And, uh, I think I worked – I had to work that day, so, um, we were hearing about – I think one of the West Coast cities was having their pride event. And there might have been some hubbub about, um, somebody, eh, going to one of their pride events with maybe ammunition – with guns in their car. Wondering what the extent of this attack was going to be. Again, at – at this time, we don’t – I don’t think we knew that much information on – no – I don’t think we knew the – who the perpetrator was on Sunday afternoon.

So just very – you know i – it was just not anything that I could relate to. Like 9/11⁵, like I was – I was born. I mean I was – I was alive during 9/11. But it was – it was much more remote. Right? Um, and this one hit a lot closer to home. Because while – while I don’t think I knew anyone there that night, I knew that pe – other people did.

0:09:43

Orlando Gay Chorus’s response to Pulse tragedy

Schneider Mmhmm. And so can you tell me a little bit about the Orlando Gay Chorus’s response, um, in the days and weeks following the shooting?

Kresky Yeah. So, um, I think Carol Studer,⁶ um, and J.D. Casto⁷ were just on top of it – on top of everything. So there were many requests for us to, um – to perform at various events. It was – you – there were so many – there was – it was – it was almost impossible if you had a, um – i – if you have a job or other commitments

⁵ September 11 attacks

⁶ Vice President of Orlando Gay Chorus

⁷ Public Relations and Marketing for the Orlando Gay Chorus

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that you could actually make every event. Um, because the chorus was, eh, pretty much in high demand. And, um, y – you know, some were m – more uplifting than others. Right? So there were, eh – the – the ones – the – Cory [Connell]’s outside of Publix [Supermarkets, Inc.] was – was hard because, um, it was unlike some of the other ones where we were trying to raise awareness or create a sense of community or strengthen the sense of community or raise money or something like that. It was like, *We’re at somebody’s memorial service*. Um, you know, quite – quite sobering for that.

Um, so there was – there was Cory’s event. Um, there was the – there was prayer vigil at the cathedral that we go to. The Episcopal cathedral that we – we go to. [Cathedral Church of] St. Luke’s. We went to that. There were two events over at Dr. Phillips Center [for the Performing Arts]. One that was put on by the local arts community, um, and one that was actually, uh, Broadway folks. They came down from New York for a fundraiser. Um, more recently, there was a vigil, um, actually at Pulse. And, um, some of the survivors, uh, w – were – were invited. And it was the first time back at Pulse for many of them. Um, and up until that time, nobody could go through the fence. Um, but that night that we were there, uh, they opened up the fence and we actually, um, sang inside – inside the – the fence.

Schneider And what were you feeling and thinking as that was going on? What was that – the atmosphere like at that – what you just described?

Kresky Um, I mean we can’t feel – I mean i – it’s like – it’s – it’s – I – I guess the only thing I can equate it to would be if you’re going to – if you’re going to a place of worship and regardless of whether it’s your church or somebody else’s church or synagogue, um, you – y – you j – you just know enough to be respectful. And then you, um, you know, talk in hushed tones. And you can smile at your friends, but you’re not – it’s not necessarily a time to be joyous per se. Or happy per se.

Um, it was, um – they had – they had murals on the wall. They had, um, eh, i – th – I don’t think it was – it was a permanent mural. It was more like a canvas or paper. I’m not sure exactly what the material was. But people were saying their goodbyes or writing down the names of their loved ones. Um, and it was – we were honored to be there. Uh, but it was very, um – I don’t know if sobering is the word. It’s kind of – I hope your other interviewees are much more articulate than I am [*laughs*].

Schneider [*laughs*].

Kresky I – it was – it was – it was – we were honored to be there. We were honored to be there. And we, um – we – we sang “True Colors”, which is fitting for the event. Um, another one that we didn’t sing that night, but, um, “You’ll Never Walk

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Alone". Those seem to be the – the two most requested songs from us. Or – or the ones that we seemed to be the most appropriate for the type of event. [inaudible].

Schneider Um, and do you have any other moments in those vigils or memorial services that stand out to you? Um, or things about them that you think – or you'd like to share?

Kresky The, um – the – the church we go to – the cathedral – St. Luke's Cathedral did a – did a wonderful, um – wonderful job, um, of – and I think there – there was media there, so there might be – there might be a t – a tape or something of it. Uh, of that night. But it was sh – they – they had one candle on the altar for each and every single victim. They had 49 candles. Each candle was – was different. No two candles were alike. Um, it was very – i – it was very nice. It was very, um – it was something that only like the cathedral could do because there was a sense of, um, kind of pageantry to it. But so tasteful. And so respectful. And just – just – it was – it – I felt that it was the right, um, um – th – the right, uh, feel to it. If that makes sense.

Um, later that night, after we had cleared out of the cathedral, they had a vigil on Lake Eola. So this might have been [sighs] a week. The Sunday after Pulse. Right? A week after. Um, the vigil at Dr. Phillips [Center for the Performing Arts] on the lawn the day after Pulse, um – I – I was not able to make it because I had to work. Uh, Nick [Nicholas Agon Kresky] went, but I was unable to make it. So, um, fo – for me, that was like the big, massive gathering event where you could actually – after leaving the cathedral, we walked over to Lake Eola, which is just maybe a block away. And then you could see the entire border of the lake surrounded with people with candles.

Um, it was just very nice to see that many people come together. Whether it was the LGBT community. Whether it was the Latinx community, um, coming together. Whether it was just people who wanted to put an end to gun violence. It was just really nice to see the – the city coming together. That probably stuck out the most.

Um, another one actually that sticks out – not a vigil. Much more, um, joyous, um, was actually Orlando City Soccer [Club]. Like I never thought I enjoyed soccer until we were invited to sing at the halftime show. And they had the entire, um, stadium decked out in a rainbow. So it was one section was red, next one was orange. All the way around. And they had 49 seats up in the bleachers left empty for, um, the victims of the shooting. And there was a candle – or not a candle, but a balloon on each of the seat[sic] to commemorate them. And you could see those balloons from anywhere in the stadium. It was just very – it was very nice to see. Um, I think it was 49 minutes into the game. They actually stopped the game for a moment of silence. So – never was interested in soccer before [laughs]. It's like, *Wow. I really like soccer now. And I really like this team.* Because I think that was the first, um, major sports event after the Pulse shooting.

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I think it was the—I think it was the Saturday after Pulse that they did that. Then they had their—their game.

Schneider And what did you think about singing in the stadium? What was that—what'd that feel like—the actual performance element?

Kresky Um, [laughs] from a—from a technical standpoint, there were some learnings[sic]. Um, there was a—I guess there's a delay. So I don't know how we sounded. The people that saw us on TV sound—heard—uh, said that—that, uh—that we sounded—we sounded good. Um, it was very welcoming. I never—I've never necessarily been the victim of—of—a hate crime. I've never, eh—I don't believe that I've been discriminated before in the past because of my, um, sexual orientation as an adult. And I don't—in Orlando, I don't really expect that anyway. Um, but these soccer fans seemed very, very welcoming. And there were just so many rainbow flags that night at the soccer stadium you would have thought it was a Pride event. Um, it was just very uplifting. Very affirming. Uh, very welcoming. Yeah.

0:20:11

Community response to Pulse tragedy

Schneider And what did you think about, um, the reaction of the community—the local community to what had happened? You touched on this a little bit already...

Kresky Mmhmm.

Schneider ...but is there anything else you—you had thought or—or felt in the community—in response—the community's reaction?

Kresky Eh, um, it—it's unfortunate it takes something like this to actually bring people together. Um, but—but in a—in a sense that's—that's what happened. People came together. And, um, I think, you know, it—the people at—the people at work kind of gave me my space, um, because [inaudible] go through all sorts of emotions. I think every day for a week I cried at some point. Listening to the radio. Watching TV. Talking to somebody. I would—I would cheer up inevitably. Um, in the car on my way to work. And—and occasionally, I'll watch a clip or something on YouTube and I'll start tearing up. People would just say, "Hey. If you need somebody to talk to, I'm here."

Um, the week following the incident, I reached out—well, I didn't take any time off. I just continued my work. But I have some gay partners. I—I work for an online travel agency, so we have, uh, partners that are—that work in hotels. And I reached out to all my—my gay friends [laughs] that worked in hotels. And it just been meet with them—one—one for lunch. Um, you know, 'cause you never know when somebody's not gonna be there anymore. So it was a—a nice time to reconnect and kind of, um—kind of reconnect. And then I—kind of like process together. And thank God for Nick. Because you—you know, we have each

other to make – to try to make sense of it all. Um, not that we did make sense of it, but th – we have each other to – to lean on, which I was very grateful for.

0:22:31

National and international response to Pulse tragedy

Schneider And, um, what did you think about reactions to the Pulse shooting from people outside of the local community? So either nationally or even internationally. Um, did you s – did you feel any of that or think about that?

Kresky Yeah. I – I think w – [sighs] you know, when I would cheer up in the car or watching TV or – or YouTube, it wasn't really tears of sadness. I think it was just feeling the love from the other – the other cities. Um, seeing pictures of, you know, the White House decked out in rainbow colors. The Sydney Opera House. All these, um, landmarks. And seeing them as just from the people around the world sending their love to Orlando.

Um, the other – I work for Expedia. That's the online travel agency. I'm not sure if you have to edit it – that out. But, um, the other Expedia offices, um, sent us, you know, "We Love Orlando" signs. And they took a picture of their, um – of their team holding up rainbow flags, banners and stuff like that. It's – it's quite unfortunate that after – after Pulse, you know, we were doing the same thing for the offices in France. And I think there was – there was[sic] a few with gun violence and terrorist attacks in Europe that we – we did the same for them. Right? Um, because you never think it's gonna happen to your – your – your own city. Right? There was New York. There was Boston. We might be a big – "big-ish" city, but we're not the same par as the size of those cities. Right? So you don't think that we would be a target for – for a terrorist attack.

Um, but yeah. The – the f – oh, my God. And talk about Festival GALA, you know, just – the love that we got from there – from – from our fellow choruses from around the world. They had these huge banners. Um, "We Are With You, Orlando". "We Are Orlando". Just like huge banners. Um, I think one's at the [Orange County Regional] History Center. But probably – I don't know. It seems like the length of this – of this room out there in the other room on the – in the foyer area. Um, just lots of love from the other cities.

0:24:57

2016 Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses festival

Schneider Mhmm. And, um, what else did you i – I know you talked about how different 2012 and 2016 were at the GALA events, but can you say more about, um, what the 2016 event was like and – and, um, yeah – how Pulse impacted...

Kresky Yeah. So...

Schenider ...that experience?

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Kresky

...um, we had – we had gone into, um – into rehearsals with a totally different set. Um, and Nick is actually probably a little better versed at talking about what we actually intended to sing originally before Pulse. After Pulse, it's like, *Okay. W – we – this set does not – is not fitting anymore. We need to have a new set.* And we came up with a new set.

Um, so “True Colors” again. It was probably the song that we sung[sic] most often at the – at the events. And then we ended with, um, “You’ll Never Walk Alone”.⁸ And I hope there’s a – I – I know there is on YouTube, um, our director speaking to the audience.⁹ Packed audience. Um, when we performed there were people who tried to get in that couldn’t. Um, everyone wanted to see Orlando from what they tell us. But there was – we – we – he spoke about what it was like waking up that morning. Um, similar – similar experience. Like, *Why are these people contacting me? Why – why am I getting all these texts? Why am I getting all these Facebook messages?*

Um, and we were just a mess. The chorus members [*laughs*] were just like trying to hold it together. We had gotten through almost every song. We knew that “You’ll Never Walk Alone”, um, was – was gonna be the next song. And it was just – it was – it was very hard to – to – to get through his introduction of that song. Um, and then when we sang, he had invited the entire, um, audience to sing along with us. Because there was no way we were getting through that song without crying if we weren’t already crying. Um, and then we ended on a – on a different song after that to kind of show people that, y – you know, Pulse is not – I think Mayor [John Hugh “Buddy”] Dyer said that Pulse is not going to define us. We weren’t gonna end on a sad song. Right? “You’ll Never Walk Alone” can be a little, um, solitary. It’s a little melancholy. So we ended with up with, uh, “We Are Family”. And then we had pink boas and pink glasses and little things in our hair. And it was just a – a – a – a fun number to end on.

Um, but yeah. Eh, tha – I think [*sighs*], uh, that was, um – eh, I – they – they said that the s – our set was the set that everyone was trying to get into to see.

And then the other – the other choruses actually – many of them made reference to, uh, the gun violence or homophobia or, um, something along those lines in their own set. And they made – a lot of times, they made mention of it. Um, now that I think about it – because while we performed, we’d also watch other people perform as well.

Schneider

And, um, was there anything else you wanted to say about the interactions between you and members of the other gay – uh, the other choruses at that event, you know, outside of the performance?

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIS4TKtZMk4>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1urPSxm7Gc>

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Kresky [laughs].

Schneider Was there anything else...

Kresky Yeah.

Schneider ...you heard from people?

Kresky Um, just a lot of—a lot of hugs from random people [laughs]. I—so I, um—I'm not always the most "huggy" person [laughs]. So it's like, *Oh! Why are you hugging me?* Um, but no. It was, um—I—I—I always appreciate when people say, "Can I hug you?" Or "May I..." It's like, *Sure*. You know? I know it's coming. Um, but yeah. There was[sic] a lot of people who wanted to welcome us. To thank us for being there. Reaffirming.

0:29:10

Significance of Pulse before and after tragedy

Schneider Mm. And I'm curious what the, um—Pulse as a place—if it meant anything to you as a place before what happened. And if now it— it has any significance in your mind as a location and site.

Kresky Yeah. So, um, I was, um—I am acquainted with one of the old managers there. Uh, with Ron Legler. I—I met him through Florida Theatrical Association. And so, um, he—he moved to Baltimore[, Maryland] a—a little while ago. I don't know that I've been to Pulse since he left Orlando. Um, so for me, I—I've been a few times. Usually as his guest. Um, it's not a place where I f—I frequented. It was no—my—my place was actually Parliament—uh, not—well, Parliament House nowadays. But, um, back—back when I was younger, um, we used to go to Pleasure Island [Walt Disney World Resort] on Thursdays. So it was usually [laughs] in—in my twenties—in my late-twenties, it was Pleasure Island on Thursday and Southern Nights on Friday. And then Saturday night: Parliament House. On those rotations that I went out every single night of the weekend. I don't do that anymore. Um, now it's like maybe once a month there's a show over at Parliament House we wanna see. We'll go to Parliament House.

Um, so, eh, Pulse kind of opened up—kind of as—as—kind of off of that "go every weekend" kind of phase of my life. Um, but Ron's partner, Andrew—Andrew Springer, had his birthday party there. So there was a reason to go to Pulse. Right? Um, so if there was a birthday party. If there were friends coming in from out of town, then we might go to Pulse.

Um, I—I think some of the—some of the stuff that the newscasters said after Pulse could be true for any of the gay clubs. That it was a safe place. That for many in the community, it was, you know, their place of worship if you will. I thought that was a change—it was strange, um—a strange, uh, term to use. But I—I know that a number of people have used gay clubs in general as a—as a—as

a—as their place of worship. As their church. Um, so I—I appreciate it for that. Um, for that aspect of it. While it wasn't necessarily my place of worship, um, I do respect it for being a safe place where people would gather. Where people would feel safe. Um, where people can be their—themselves. Right? Um, yeah.

And now that I'm older, it's like I don't know that I can stay out past midnight [laughs]. So I—had I been out, I think I would've been in bed way before—way before 1:45 at that point.

But if it was—you know, as you think about how if it wasn't Pulse and if it was Parlia—and if it was Parliament House. And if it wasn't 1:45, but it was twelve midnight or something like that, it could have been any one of us. Right? Um, you never know.

0:32:57

Role of social media in aftermath of tragedy

Schneider Um, you mentioned briefly, um, Facebook and things like that. People contacting you after it happened. Did you see social media playing any response in—or any, um, part in the time following the shooting in people's response to the shooting? Or did you feel like that wasn't really a big part of—of people's reactions?

Kresky Before Pulse, I never knew that there was a feature on Facebook to mark yourself safe. And while I was appreciative of that so I can see which of my friends were, um—were safe, I was like, *Oh, my God. Why is this even necessary? Or like what kind of world to we live in that this is necessary that they built this?* Um, I don't know—eh, you know, I like to think that, for the most part, Facebook is—is neutral. And so I don't know that they did anything to either, um, promote awareness about Pulse or downplay it. Um, obviously, so much of what we see on Facebook is just who we decide to follow on Facebook. Um, so lo—lots of posts from, um—lots—lots of posts about, um—from—from other—from other cities wishing us well. From other gay choruses wishing us well. Um, lots of that stuff, which was quite uplifting.

Um, eh, there were th—you know, there were the—the pictures of—of the outside of Pulse. As people were driving by. Um, I—I never visited either the hospital or Pulse while the memorials were up. Before, eh, the [Orange County] Regional History Center started protecting the—the—the stuff left behind. Um, but there was[sic] many pictures of the memorials were laid out. Either—and there was actually—they were laying stuff out on the lawn, too, of Dr. Phillips. Um, so saw many pictures of that on Facebook as well.

It was helpful to find out, you know—to promote certain things. Like, um, the little arts organizations did the "Beautiful Together" event over at Dr. Phillips. So there was lots of, um, you know, *We're trying to—to—to promote the event. And then so, you know, we're sharing stuff on Facebook.* Um, [laughs] I don't know how much of it you could share for the—for the—"From Broadway with Love[: A

Benefit Concert for Orlando]” because I think that the event sold out almost immediately. Um, but there was – there were[sic] lots of mention about who’s coming to the event and who confirmed. And, um, during the event and after the event, lots of pictures of – of – of, you know, the celebrities interacting with the – with the locals, which was nice to see.

Yeah. But for the most part, I think that – I like to think that Facebook is pretty neut – neutral. And then, uh – it’s just a tool that we use, in that, you know, we’re – we’re – we see [*door closes*] what we choose to see and who we choose to follow on Facebook.

0:36:23

Long-term consequences of Pulse tragedy

Schneider Do you have any thoughts about the long-term impact of Pulse, um, and the shooting, whether the impact, um – what – let me – let me s – ask that question again. What would you think the long-term consequences of the shooting might be for the Orlando gay community and for the larger City of Orlando?

Kresky Um, gun control reform I think would be a big one. I – y – you know, the perpetrator wasn’t from Orlando. He came from outside of Orlando. So I think that just educating people I think would help. Um, but, you know – but then, you know, we wonder like, *Okay. Are – do we need to go outside of Orlando to educate people there?* Um, you know, when somebody shoots somebody like what’s – in any fashion, it’s like, *What the heck’s going through their mind? Like H – where did this come from? Where did this hate come from? Where’d this ignorance come – come – come from?* And y – you like – we can’t always dictate how people think. I don’t think we should dictate what people think. But I think that we can – we – we can put laws in place that prevent massive harm through – through assault rifles. Through guns. Through gun violence. Whatever. Um, I think they go hand in hand. I think we need more [*sighs*], um – I think we need gun control that makes sense. I think we need to – to reform some of the stuff that we have out there. Um, but at the same time, I think we need to continue to educate. Um, part of our mission statement for the – for the Orlando Gay Chorus is about changing people’s hearts and people’s minds. And I think that we need to continue doing that so that this doesn’t happen in the future.

0:38:52

Closing remarks

Schneider Um, do you have any other reflections about the Pulse shooting or about your i – involvement in the Orlando Gay Chorus or anything else you’d like to talk about?

Kresky Um, I w – I’m appreciative of you – being given the opportunity to do this. Um, the chorus has been – you know, it’s family. It can be dysfunctional. We don’t always get along. There’s sibling rivalry. Um, but we’re lucky in the sense that we had a family to fall back on. And we had our own support group. I don’t

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know how many other people, um, have that luxury. Right? Um, that have the ability to – to seek the support of someone as easily as we had it. Um, we’re – we’re able to be there for each other. We’re – we’re definitely very appreciative of that. Um, you know? So i – this would’ve been totally different if it wasn’t for the chorus I think. And if it wasn’t for Nick. Um, yeah.

Schneider Well, is there anything else you didn’t talk about that you’d like to share?

Kresky Um, I’m sure I’ll think of something as soon as you turn off the camera. But [laughs] for...

Schneider [inaudible].

Kresky ...right now, I’m good.

Schneider Okay. Well, thank you so much for participating and sharing your story with us. We really appreciate it.

Kresky Yeah.

End of Interview