

# The Asian Reporter

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**TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA**

■ Polo



## What we know, after Orlando

Today is Tuesday. Tuesdays are still early in a Portland workweek. After today, there's a lot more to do. So much more.

Today is only two days after a crazy man with an assault rifle, killed and killed as much as he wanted to. Then he reloaded to kill again. After that, he reloaded and killed even more daughters and nieces younger than mine, sons and nephews just as precious as ours. At will. Oh ampun'illaah (Oh Lord have Mercy).

It's Tuesday evening and we're gathered around our Muslim elder's kitchen table, listening intently for more information about that ugly man — What about his familia? — His faith? — His motive? We don't know. We cannot know, we are humble women and men. We are a thick continent and three time zones away from another instance of cruelty lit by the excesses of another national election year.

Our swollen hearts are racing, our muddled minds are too. What can we do — we elders and our younger civic activists; we community-policing commanders and our blue street cops; we Arabs and Africans, Anglos and Asians. Fathers and mothers, aunties and uncles. All of us, so startled. And stuck.

For us, Tuesday finally ends. We're exhausted after three days of alternating highs and lows, all bad. There are so many mixed feelings around our table, among our many Muslim communities. Coherence eludes me. Our lives have not properly prepared us. Not for this. Not for these 100 families suffering from that single sick shooter. Not in a gay club.

**What're we to do**

I drive away. Slowly north on Highway 217. I tentatively blinker right, to Oregon 26. I cannot navigate well so far outside the emotional geography of my small life. I am lost. GPS cannot help. And I can't locate our ancestors' or elders' radio signal. I strain to hear my Abrahamic teachers' and my university professors' voices.

Very late Tuesday, after our city streets and our household mice quiet down, I hear my patient teachers' and persistent ancestors' distant whispering. They say they've already spoken about unhappy moments such as these. Many-many times.

Over your family's seven decades of angry invading armies, of brutally sudden expulsion, of humiliating resettlement in resentful Europe then in racialized America — they say — at every ugly



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*intersection, our direction to you has been the same. Always the same. By now, you already know how to feel, what to do.*

As midnight nears, as in every earlier existential crisis — mine, our pop's, our grandpa's — I re-examine what I know. What I can know.

I made a list, short and sure:

I know I love our son and his River City art. I know I love our nephew and his Medellín community building. I love our daughter, her rural Cambodia and Kenya health clinics. I know how much I love our daughter's daughters' chocolate eyes and their sing-song voices. I know for sure that each of these souls are living expressions of love.

I know that love is a smaller word for God. A tear to our oceans. Love is God, as much as I can know God. I know I must nourish and warm myself with this littler love, their love, because all that humbling mystery, all that grandness, that is God remains really unknowable and practically undeliverable, given the narrow bandwidth and slow bit-rate service our side of town gets. Comcast, man.

Therefore, I know that every son and nephew,

*Continued on page 8*