

Guns, Pride, Juneteenth, and the Emanuel 9

By Ryan W Roberts, OLF; Institute Justice Team

June has long been a month rife with notable events in the justice consciousness, both celebrating achievements and calling us to the work still required. Great harm has been done in Junes past, but the human spirit has also displayed our communal magnificence in responding to injustices both chronic and acute.

The date of this month's *Everyday Justice* publication, June 18, always feels like a liminal space now, sandwiched as it is between the commemoration of the June 17, 2015 [massacre of the Emanuel 9](#) in Charleston, South Carolina and the celebration of [Juneteenth](#), the anniversary of the 1865 end of [non-punitive slavery](#) throughout the United States. In 1968 in Washington, D.C., Juneteenth was celebrated as a day of both celebration and heightened tension in Resurrection City, the temporary city (zip code 20013) that settled the National Mall as part of the [Poor People's Campaign](#) that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was working on when he was assassinated. And in 2020, despite the imminent threat of COVID-19 spreading through large crowds, June saw the [global eruption of Black Lives Matter protests](#) and a surge in abolitionist sentiment in response to the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer.

June is also celebrated as [Pride Month](#) to affirm and celebrate the dignity of LGBTQIA+ (or [QUILTBAG](#)) community members, a commemoration timed to align with the anniversary of the June 28, 1969 watershed [Stonewall uprising](#) with prominent women leaders of color like [Marsha P. Johnson](#) and [Sylvia Rivera](#) against a police raid enforcing gender- and sexuality-based oppression. But we also mark the anniversary of the June 12, 2016 [Pulse nightclub massacre](#), a hate crime against QUILTBAG people and the deadliest mass shooting at that time in U.S. history. One prominent message of Pride is that joy is resistance to oppression, and holding it in tension with our laments builds strong communities and saves lives.

It's also notable that June is Gun Violence Awareness Month, and gun violence is a tool used by our nation's powerful and privileged to maintain oppression. The first [Wear Orange](#) day took place mere days before the Mother Emanuel attack in 2015 and just a year before the Pulse nightclub attack. The Gun Violence Archive reports [at least 23 mass shootings](#) in the U.S. in the first half of June 2026 alone. U.S. laws addressing gun violence are a patchwork that shifts often and requires vigilance to simply monitor, let alone improve.

The Sisters of Mercy have been working since Catherine McAuley herself to address the injustices of the day, and the Institute today continues faithfully to do so. Racism is one of the five Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, and the search is currently open to [find co-directors for the Anti-Racism Office](#) dedicated to eliminating both personal and institutional racism. The 2023 Commitment Statement led to the creation of the [Love and Abundant Justice](#) working group, lifting up the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people. The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas are a founding member of the [Nuns Against Gun Violence](#) coalition.

In this complicated month of June, both celebratory and fraught, may you learn, pray, and grow in your pursuit of the manifold forms of justice.