

Only This Love Can Heal Las Vegas—and the Rest of America

We feel it as a nation.

A headline startles our phones awake. A quick glance. Disbelief. We swipe to read the article or click to turn on the TV—and blood-curdling reality assaults our senses and humanity. The fleeing crowds breach barriers with screams that feel torn from our throats. Heroes in blue, civilians too, rush toward a savagery we can scarcely comprehend.

News stations blur the sheet-draped forms and opt for more wide-angled views—but those staccato shots we hear—they brutalize us still. Each pop another body slammed, another helpless loved one begging God to stem death's flow. And 59 times—a universe of past and present and still-untasted future collapses on itself. On all of us.

We feel it as a nation.

This grief. Again. Helpless and raw. We've seen it crash its aching waves over this land before. We've heard it supplicate and roar. We've sensed its darkness seeping impotence and dread into our common core and we fear, with each new tide, that it will anchor there forever more.

And yet we dare.

We've dared since we began—before we even were One Nation Under God. We dared to reach this shore. We dared to dream of something more. Of something greater than the flaws of individual man. We dared to strive for lofty ideals we knew we couldn't realize, yet still we tried, with blood and work and stubborn hope, to birth a greater good, a hard-won brotherhood.

And in this time of deepest grief, I see us as we truly are—courageous and compassionate, displaying the rare dignity of selfless grit and grace. In the faces of physicians, the tales of bruised survivors and the broken fortitude of victims' families—such grit. Such wounded strength. And grace—it's right there too. In the sacrifice of strangers laying down their lives for others. In the kindness of our citizens offering deeds and words and tears to heal their still-shocked spheres.

The grit and grace embody our resolve and demonstrate a hope that will not be destroyed—not by the blows of nature's rage nor by the hand of man. They bridge the chasms, dismantle the barriers and let us see each other at our noblest best.

And they are fueled by love.

A love that *dares*—as we must dare—to hold and help and overcome. A love that soars over fallen towers and blood-soaked, trampled earth, declaring its tenacity—defining our humanity.

Today, despite the horror—no, *because* of this atrocity—I choose this love that manifests most mightily when we're brought to our bloodied knees. A love that points to heaven's peace and binds our wounds and soothes our pain and rises every time with bright audacity when we can stand no more.
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