

Comments from social media following the Hate Crime attack and killing at The Pulse Bar in Orlando Florida on June 12, 2016:

Public Health Educator Writer

Watching PUZZLES was the antidote to the sense of despair I felt after the horrific murders in Orlando. The action the filmmakers have taken in making the film widely accessible through free streaming on VIMEO is an important way to contribute to the dialogue that needs to happen around hates crimes and meaningful action to prevent them. PUZZLES asks hard questions and provides a window into the way that the alienated rage of a group of young people in New Bedford--frustrated by lack of jobs, opportunity and a sense of the value of their lives--was greatly amplified by attachment to an ideology of Nazism and white supremacy that ultimately led to a hate crime against the gay community. These young people defined their "family" by exclusion, hate and racism. By contrast, the gay community of New Bedford found strength in inclusion, acceptance and activism that ultimately led to a program of advocacy and education. I hope PUZZLES is viewed widely and sparks the kind of discussion we need to be having, as we look for ways to combat the rise of Trumpism and ideology based on hate.

Yoga Health School Owner

PUZZLES is a powerful film about the connection between hate crimes and extremist ideologies. It opens a window on angry teens who connect to hate and white supremacy. It also depicts the vibrant lives of working class gay men and their close-knit families in a struggling Massachusetts community. This is truly a must see.

Germany

Thank you for making PUZZLES available! This is terrible horrendous hate crime. Even here in Hamburg, during pride month – people are so insecure and are likely to turn (even more) racist. I'm afraid we have a real surge of the racist right wing – even many LGBT folks are suspicious of "Muslims" now. Studies confirm the surge, and elections. They don't have an analysis of oppression. The right wing is instrumentalizing this – it's "cool" to be "not against gays", now that gives them an argument to be racist. The left needs to sharpen language.

NY Clinical Social Worker

What's striking to me about watching Puzzles is how it helped me process an array of emotions after the murderous attack at Pulse in Orlando - my shock and anger had turned to despair and depression - viewing this compelling documentary about another anti-gay hate crime, from 10 years ago - another act of terrifying violence at people perceived as different, who were dehumanized by Jacob Robida and his passion for neo-Nazism. This unimaginable loss of life is a heart-wrenching reminder of the escalating levels of violence gay, lesbian, queer and transgender people face throughout the United States.

San Francisco Therapist

I was very impressed with PUZZLES but saddened that it was one of many along with Orlando - and unfortunately probably more. I was struck by how everyone in the documentary seemed to be victims. The gay patrons victim to societal bigotry, prejudice, and physical violence but the attacker and his group were also victims - of poverty, family problems, lack of jobs and resources - and they then scapegoat the gay population to deal with their dysfunction.

Professor Film Studies

These hate crimes have become all too familiar in the United States and globally. When will we learn to tolerate our diverse beliefs, preferences, lifestyles? The documentary PUZZLES powerfully shines a light on those complicit in perpetuating hateful and intolerant rhetoric. This necessary documentary opens windows for dialogue and the sharing of perspectives - critically important in achieving greater understanding and tolerance.

Public NJ Health Nurse

A stunning film - an intimate picture, with warm and caring close-ups of complex personalities in the working class, old whaling town of New Bedford, MA. The documentary moves at a compelling pace and in just 50 minutes, delivers like a focused mystery, an in-depth detailed story ending with a surprising, but hopeful message.

Also striking to me about Puzzles is how it helped me process an array of emotions after the murderous attack at Pulse in Orlando - my shock and anger had turned to despair and depression - viewing this compelling documentary about another anti-gay hate crime, from 10 years ago - another act of terrifying violence at people perceived as different, who were dehumanized by Jacob Robida and his passion for neo-Nazism. To find some sense of identity, possibly to be remembered in history, Jacob Robida planned his attack of people in the comfort of a "safe" place. Jacob Robida must have longed for the sense of connection and community found in this local bar. And now, after Orlando and the nightmare in the nightclub Pulse we are learning that such a place, such a friendly and welcoming home away from home for the gay community, open to ALL, exists in most towns.

Trust Movies Review by Lee Liberman

A Puzzle becomes a Rainbow

When economic pain is widely felt, hate crimes result -- 250,000 annually. The 53-minute documentary, PUZZLES, When Hate Came to town, by Tami Gold and David Pavlovsky of Hunter College, NYC, is an engrossing small tale about the collision between poverty and homophobia in the antique town of New Bedford, MA, a once-upon-a-time wealthy whaling capitol. The mixed gay and straight bar Puzzles suffered a hatchet and gun attack by a troubled youth on 3 Puzzles bar patrons, shaking the community from top to bottom.

You can smell the sea, tread the cobblestones, and bear witness to the faded industrial past of this poor, rough-hewn, but charming small city that has fallen far from its heyday but remains close-knit and resilient.

The voice of a middle-age victim of the hatchet-wielding 18-year-old perpetrator, Jacob Robida, members of his teen gang, and both gay and straight patrons of the bar, Puzzles, immerse you intimately into the ugliness of the 2006 attack and its ripple effect on the community.

It may seem at first that the film will focus only on the personal stories of the victims and the teens who were shocked and bereaved by the violent act of their friend, but the filmmakers spend important time showing the reparative work done in the community -- the fight back with words and community action. Special efforts by political leaders, the police, and schools and the advent of Gay Pride events have begun to heal wounds and become future-oriented. Explained one bar patron, Jacob open doors for us and helped make things right for gay people living in the shadows.

Finally, when the bar Puzzles changed hands, it was renamed Rainbow's End, marking New Bedford's maturation from shadowy ignorance into an enlightened, more tolerant present.

A reference to gay former House member Gary Studds, now deceased, would have added a nice note. He represented New Bedford in Congress and served on the marine subcommittee as an historic example of the community's lack of homophobia, rather its predisposition to problem-solving and good work. But in sum, this lovely small gem of a film strikes just the right balance between telling the story of a small city with a historic past and its coping with modern day stress.