

NEVER FORGET 06.13.16 5:16 PM ET

THE DAILY BEAST

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These Are The Victims Of The Pulse Gay Nightclub Massacre In Orlando

The mother of 12 who beat cancer twice. The brother whose sister drove 12 hours to say goodbye. The couples who died together. These are their stories.

They came to Orlando from everywhere.

The immigrant from South Africa, the native of Connecticut. The youngest was 19, the oldest 50. They were pharmacy techs, travel agents, entrepreneurs, students, and church-goers. Many were gay, lesbian, or transgender; all were someone's son or daughter.

Now they are gone.



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The 49 people murdered in the deadliest mass shooting in American history must be remembered as individuals. These are their stories.

— Justin Miller

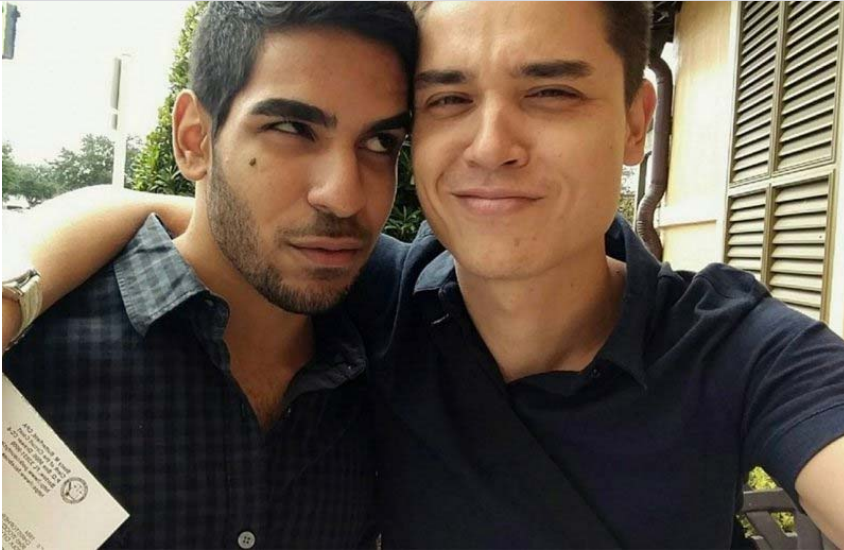
Brenda McCool, 49, raised 12 children and beat cancer twice. She was dancing at Pulse with her son, who is gay, when the gunshots began.

McCool died, her son survived.



Christopher Andrew Leinonen, 32, was with his boyfriend, Juan Guerrero, 22, who was also killed.

Leinonen's mother, Christine, gave a TV interview in front of a local hospital, where she pleaded for help finding out what had happened to her son. "I just feel terrible. I don't know where my son is," she said sobbing. "We can't get a hold of him. He was sitting right next to his boyfriend." Leinonen started his high school's first gay-straight alliance.



Juan Ramon Guerrero

Guerrero had come out to his family two years ago. His cousin said Guerrero was initially afraid how his family would react.

“They were very accepting,” said Robert Guerrero, 19. “As long as he was happy, they were OK with it.”



Frank Hernandez, 27, had a younger sister. When Julissa Leal got a frantic phone call from Hernandez's boyfriend on Sunday morning saying he'd been shot, Leal drove 12 hours from Louisiana to Florida to see her older brother, the *Miami Herald* reported. When she arrived, he was dead.



Akya Murray, 18, is the youngest confirmed victim in the attack. Murray was hiding in Pulse's bathroom and was on the phone with her mother before the terrorist entered and later killed her. Murray was a standout basketball player at Philadelphia's West Catholic Preparatory High School, scoring more than 1,000 points last season. Murray earned a full ride at a Pennsylvania university she was to attend after she graduated the Monday before she died.



Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, 35, met his long-time partner Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, 37, at Perfumania where he worked. They were both murdered during the Pulse shooting. On Facebook, a family member of Wilson-Leon's announced, "It is with a broken and heavy heart that I share the sadness the loss of my cousin, my love, Dani or Lestat Wilson and his beautiful light Jean, Naej Mendez. I don't know what else to say. Just heartbroken, devastated, broken and feeling like this is some awful nightmare from which one will awake ... Please hug your loved ones tight. Stop this violence. This madness. Love one another. #Pulse #onelove."



Luis Vielma

Luis S. Vielma, 22, had visited Disney World hours before the shooting and posted a photo there with several people. “True friends who become family,” the caption read. Mourners on social media described him as “always happy and a joy to be around.” At some point, the vivacious young man had worked on the Harry Potter ride at Universal Theme Park, as J.K. Rowling [noted in a tweet](#) honoring him after his death, adding, “He was 22 years old. I can’t stop crying.”



Stanley Manolo Almodovar III

Stanley Manolo Almodovar III, 23, was [originally](#) from Springfield, Massachusetts, and worked as a pharmacy technician. His mother [described him](#) as a happy man with a big heart; he would have turned 24 later this month.



Edward Sotomayor Jr.

Edward Sotomayor Jr., 34, was the national brand manager for Al and Chuck Travel, and known to friends as “very outgoing, very friendly.” One friend described him as “one of the greatest guys I’ve ever met. He touched so many people’s lives because he’s such a positive person. He would do anything for anybody.”



Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo

Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, 20, was a dancer. In November 2015, after the massacre at Paris’s Bataclan nightclub, he updated his profile picture to show solidarity with the French victims. A former teacher remembered him as “a ray of sunshine every day.”



Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera

Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, 36, was originally from Puerto Rico and studied at the Universidad Central de Bayamon. Ortiz-Rivera was visiting Orlando from Miami and went to Pulse with a large group of friends—at least three of whom died in the shooting. His former roommate described him as “always willing to help everybody,” “always generous,” and someone who “sacrificed himself a lot for his family.”

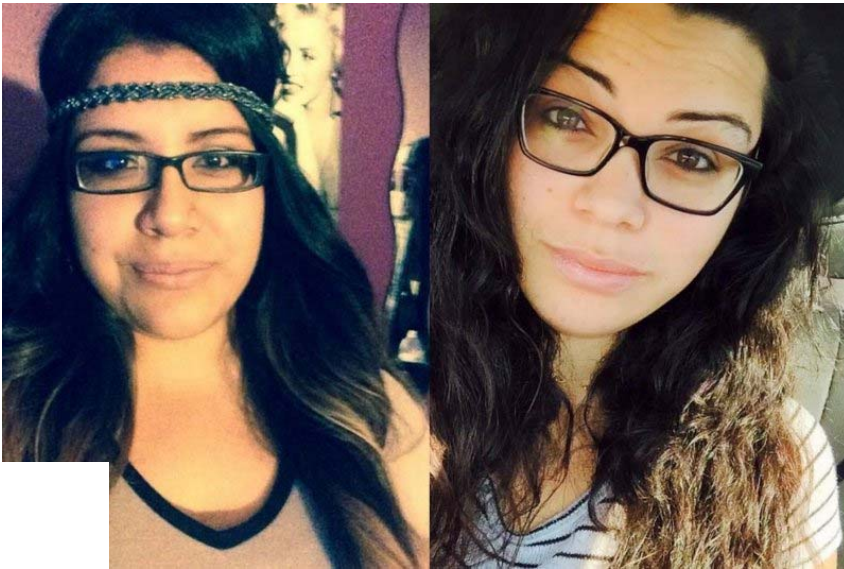


Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, 25, went to Pulse with Cruz, his friend, and was originally from Puerto Rico. Menendez was studying health-care management at a local university. “He is my older brother’s only child, and he was the light and the life of all the family gatherings. This all feels like a dream, and I’m going to wake up and he will be texting me or calling me to tell me he is OK,” a cousin told the *Orlando Sentinel*.



Kimberly Morris, 37 years old

Kimberly Morris, 37, a bouncer at Pulse, had moved to Orlando from Connecticut. A former college classmate wrote in remembrance on Facebook, "KJ Morris you always lit up the room with your smile."



Amanda Alvear, 25, was a nursing student at the University of South Florida. Alvear was at Pulse with her best friend, Mercedes Flores, 26, who was also killed. [Amanda's Snapchat](#) captured the sound of shots ringing out, the first such footage to emerge from the massacre. "I love you baby girl," her sister, [Ashley said](#). "You were and always will be my baby sister. I'm so heartbroken."

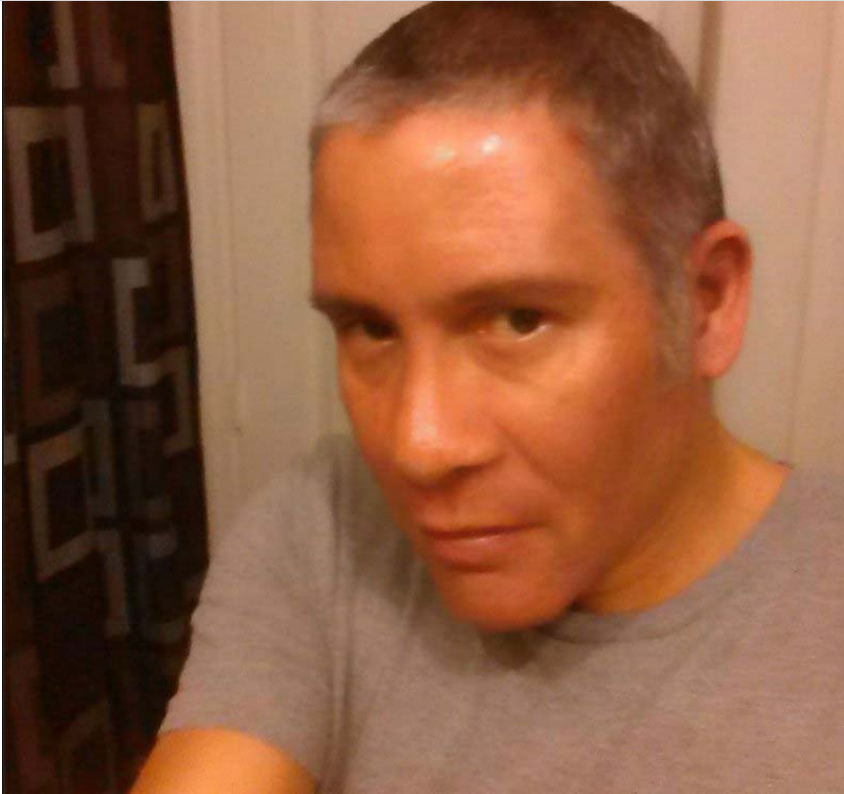
Flores, 26, was remembered by friends on social media as an "amazing woman."



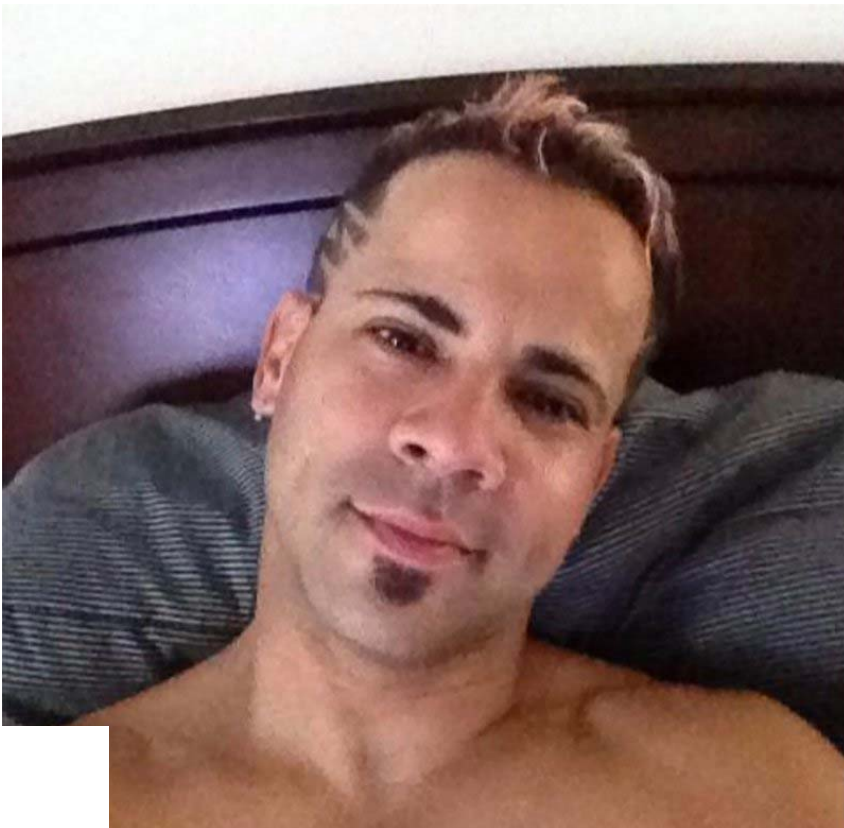
Anthony Luis Laureanodisla, 25, went by Alanis Laurell on the drag scene. "Alanis Laurell was a amazing performer and a beautiful person inside and out. She will be missed deeply. You are now a angel looking down at all of us," Drag Around the World [posted](#).



Deonka Deidra Drayton, 32, worked at Pulse, [according](#) to an aunt who called her murder "senseless." She is survived by a three-year-old she was helping raise.



Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, 50, traveled the world as a professional Jibaro dancer. Originally from Puerto Rico, he lived in Orlando. A family member noted on Facebook, "What happened in Orlando affects all of us because it is an act of hate against the freedom to be who you are."



Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, 35, had a son and worked at Disney Live! His little boy just graduated from pre-kindergarten this month. "I have no words to express how proud and happy I am



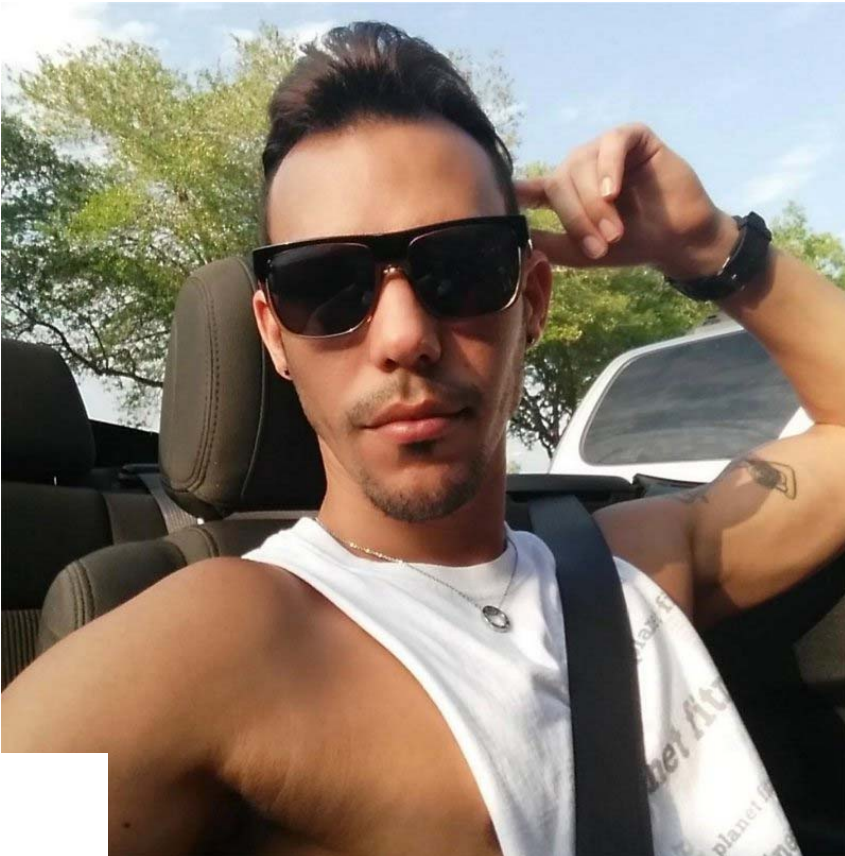
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, 37, was the owner of D'Magazine Salon and Spa. He was at Pulse with his partner of 13 years, 39-year-old Luis Conde, as they celebrated the birthday of a friend; both men, who were natives of Puerto Rico, were killed in the shooting.



Luis Daniel Conde, 39. Killed alongside his longtime partner, Juan P. Rivera Velazquez. In his social media posts, Conde showed off a joie de vivre and sense of humor; he also changed his profile picture in solidarity with the Bataclan victims last November.



Oscar Aracena-Montero, 26, was with Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, 31, when they were both killed. Montero's cousin wrote in Spanish [in a Facebook post](#), "Today is and will be as long as I live the most devastating day of my life. The day when, by the decision of another, my beloved cousin is no longer with me."



beautiful smile.



Shane Evan Tomlinson, 33, was the manager and lead vocalist at Frequency Band. He describes himself on Facebook as an "ordinary guy living an extra-ordinary life using my God given gift to navigate through this journey."



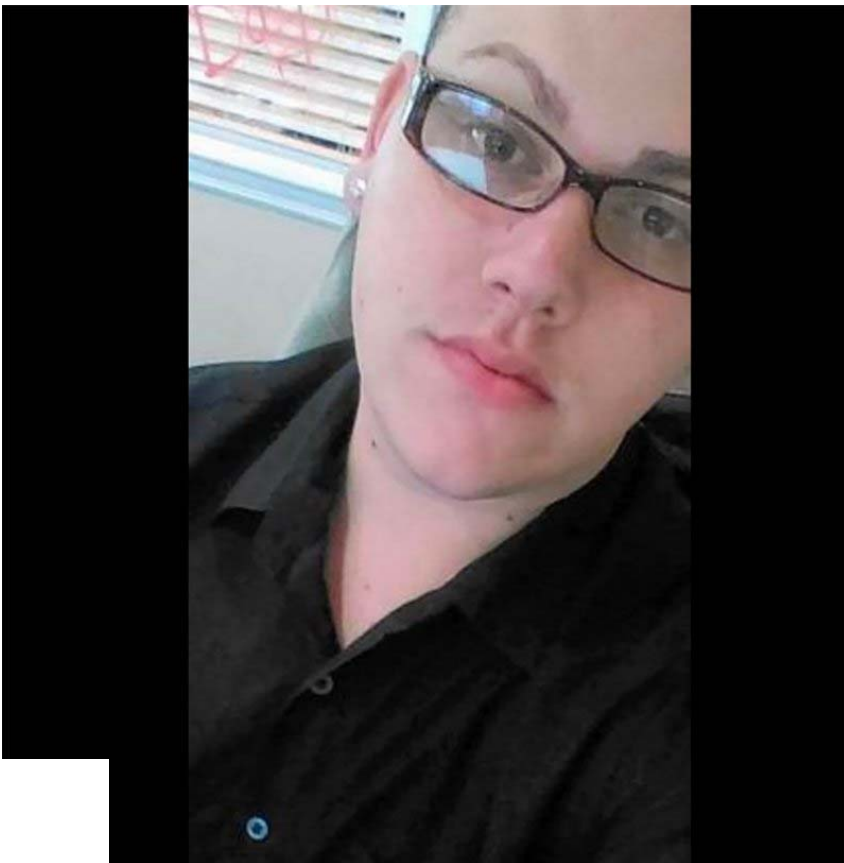
Tevin Eugene Crosby, 25, was from Statesville, North Carolina, and studied business administration at Strayer University South. Described as ambitious and hard-working, he owned his own firm and inspired his siblings and family with his dedication.



Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, 30, was an accountant who lived in downtown Orlando. In a [GoFundMe page](#) to support his mother, the family describes him as “the life of the party,” and a “momma’s boy at heart.” Justice sent text messages to his mother during the attack on Pulse, saying, “He’s coming,” and finally, “I’m gonna die.”



Darryl Roman Burt II, 29, was a financial aid officer at a local college who worked with military service members. He recently finished a master's degree, friends said. "He definitely leaves an impression and had a big personality and he is missed," the president of Keiser University's Jacksonville campus said.



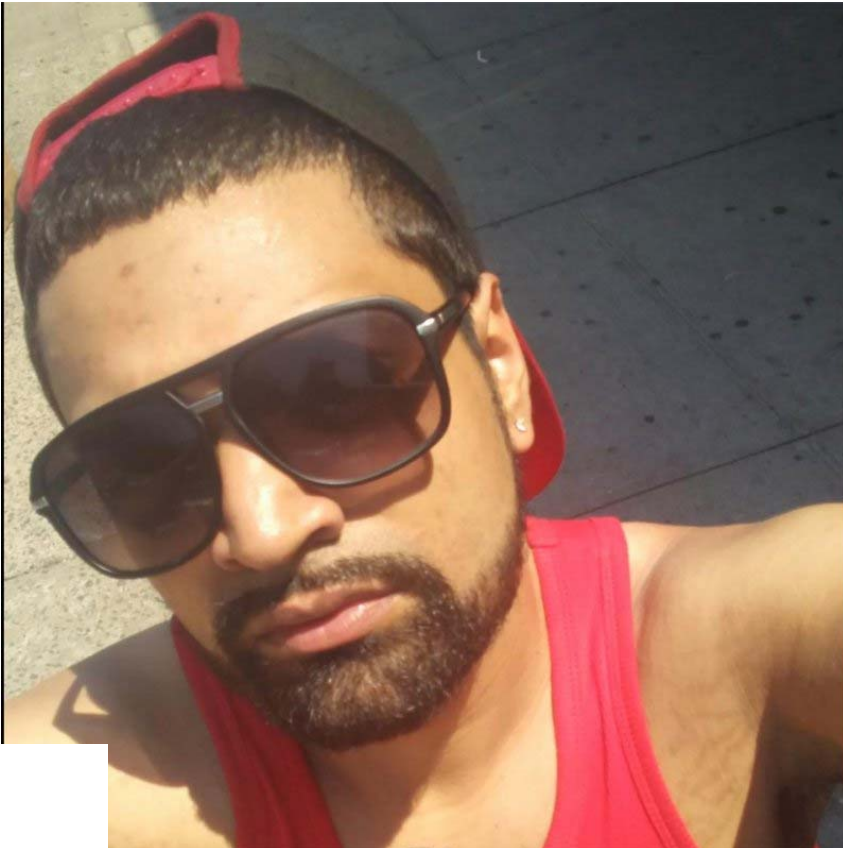
Leroy Valentin Fernandez, 25, was a leasing agent in Orlando who loved to dance, sing, and dress as



Miguel Angel Honorato, 30, was married, a hardworking father of three children, and lived in Apopka, Florida. He and his family own four restaurants in the Orlando area. He was at Pulse dancing with friends at the time of the shooting.



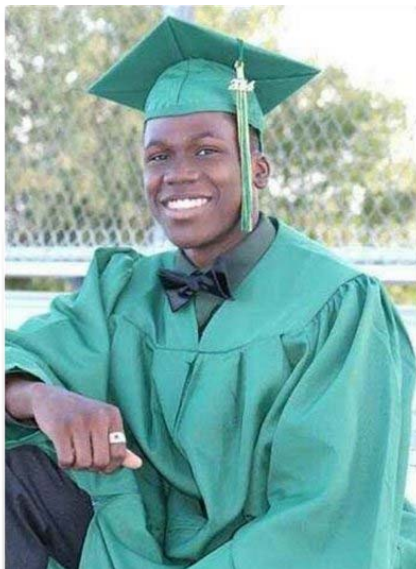
Jonathan Camuy, 24, was an assistant producer for Telemundo in Orlando. According to Chairman of NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises, Cesar Conde, Camuy most recently worked on audience development for the show "La Voz Kids." He was killed alongside another NBCUniversal employee, Luis Vielma.



social worker for the elderly in east Brooklyn.



Javier Jorge-Reyes, 40, was a supervisor at Gucci and studied tourism at Academia San Antonio de Guayama in Puerto Rico. In November, he updated his [Facebook profile](#) photo in solidarity with Paris after it was struck by terrorism. Jorge-Reyes' coworker, Leonel Melendez, was also at Pulse, shot in the head, and is in a coma.



Jason Benjamin Josaphat, 19, called his mother from Pulse early on Sunday. She told him to hide in the bathroom, according to the [Orlando Sentinel](#). Josaphat recently began taking classes at Valencia College and was interested in studying computer science. He was an Orlando native with two brothers



Cory James Connell, 21, was a student at Valencia college studying sports journalism and broadcasting. His brother [described](#) Cory as being the family “super hero,” and an “amazing soul.” [CNN reports](#) Connell was at Pulse with his girlfriend, who survived the attack.



Antonio Davon Brown, 29, was a former student at Florida A&M University. According to the [school](#), Brown had been a criminal justice major and a member of ROTC before graduating in 2008.



Juan Chevez-Martinez, 25, worked at Reunion Resorts where employees including a housekeeper said he was “very kind and loving,” according to the *Orlando Sentinel*.



Jerald Arthur Wright, 31, was a seasonal employee who worked at Walt Disney World. He went to Pulse to celebrate his friend's 21st birthday, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*. Co-workers described him as “one of the kindest people you could meet,” and noted that he went out of his way to make international visitors feel welcome.



Jean C. Nives Rodriguez, 27, was a great person inside and out," according to friends. His cousin's wife wrote on Facebook that the families are are devastated by the loss. The general manager of a local store, he just recently bought his first house. "He was just a caring, loving guy," one of his best friends told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "Just like a big teddy bear."



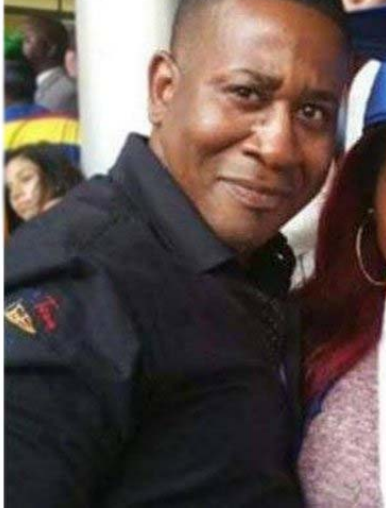
Angel L. Candelario-Padro, 28, was a ophthalmic technician and studied in Puerto Rico, the *Miami Herald* reports. He described himself on Facebook as "an adventurous, easy going but responsible man that would like to live the life completely."



Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, 33, worked at a blood donation center and earned enough to buy a home almost exactly one year ago, the *Sentinel* [reported](#). "He loved to dance salsa and all kinds of Latin dancing," a friend told the paper. "He didn't even drink because he had a long drive home and always wanted to be safe."



Joel Rayon Paniagua, 32, went to Pulse to dance just as he had many times before. A Mexican immigrant who moved to Florida at the beginning of the century before briefly returning to his native land was [described by friends to the *Sentinel*](#) as humble, cheerful, and religious. "He was loyal. He was always trying to do stuff to make you feel better," a friend who met him at church said.



Paul Terrell Henry, 41. A Chicago native and father of two—his daughter just recently graduated high school—was an expert pool player and loved to dance.



Yilmery Rodriguez Sullivan, 24. In a GoFundMe set up in her sister's memory, Natalia Canlan wrote, "We went there for a night of fun and instead she paid with her life." Sullivan is survived by her husband, Pito, and her two babies.



Alejandro Barrios Martinez, 21. Friends posted on Facebook that the Orlando Cuban community had suffered a huge loss. "He was a very special boy, like a brother to me," one friend wrote.



Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, 24, worked at JP Morgan Chase in Tampa. "He was so strong, and was my rock through everything we ever went through," his brother Junior posted on Facebook. "He was the light of my family and I know that he will continue to bless us and his light will be radiating down from a better place."