



Statement in response to mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas, Buffalo, New York and Laguna Woods, California

We are deeply saddened at the tragic mass shooting at Uvalde Elementary School in Texas, and the recent mass shootings in Buffalo, New York and in California. We grieve with the families, those who were injured or traumatized, and the larger communities that have been affected by these horrific events. There will be plenty of debates about the politics of gun control, mental health, and gun violence as a public health emergency, but right now, we at PSE are centering these tragic events as a “public heart” issue, particularly in Black, brown and other historically disinvested communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has, without question, disproportionately affected people of color due to racism being the dominant social determinant of health in our nation and world. The fact that two of the shooters were 18-years-old, that gun violence is the number one killer of Black people, combined with historical policies and practices, have resulted in the perfect storm of events we see today. This isn’t just a Black, brown, or other community’s issue...this is everyone’s issue.

The crisis of violence and apathy in our society is an issue of the heart. You can not legislate the heart. We must all hold space for all those traumatized by these events, including the victims’ families and the survivors, but also for the collective trauma we all feel, and especially where these events continue to occur. This is why we must continue to fight for racial equity for all people. All concerned communities regardless of race, political affiliation, or economic status must work collectively to change people’s minds and hearts. We can not continue to sit on the sidelines; it takes courageous action. We must not be afraid to stand up and call out these instances for what they are - an affront against humanity. We all have a responsibility to fight racial injustice in all forms and continue to lift up one another and the communities we serve.