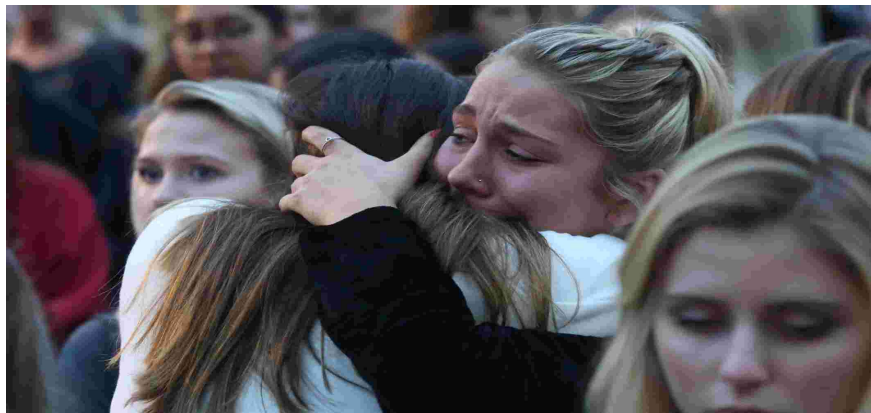


Hundreds attend vigil at Florida State for Tallahassee yoga studio shooting victims

Ashley White, Tallahassee Democrat

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Florida State University holds a vigil on campus for Hot Yoga Tallahassee shooting victims on Sunday, Nov. 4, 2018. Tallahassee Democrat



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The quiet was deafening.

A muted crowd of hundreds gathered around Florida State's "Unconquered" statue, just two days removed from a [mass shooting at a Midtown yoga studio](#). The Sunday sky had cleared of rain, but the overcast clouds matched the still stunned faces of students and faculty.

The vigil was held for victims [Maura Binkley, 21](#), and [Dr. Nancy Van Vessem, 61](#). Their families sat on folding chairs. Behind them stood sorority and fraternity members, students from the College of Medicine, and others paying their respects. Some cried softly. Others leaned on each other for support.

Conversations stayed at a whisper. The pain from the shooting was too raw.

President John Thrasher offered his condolences in the same spot where, one week before, he had spoken at a vigil for the 11 victims shot and killed at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

He stressed his stance on keeping guns off campus. He was adamant that society must do something to balance the right to own guns and the right to feel safe.

"It's hard to understand why such caring, kind and compassionate people would be taken from us," Thrasher said. "Maura and Nancy were shining lights to all who knew them."



The night was for healing, said Laura Osteen, director of the center for leadership and social change. It was for feeling love and strength through the pain. But it also was for confronting the atrocity that happened only miles from campus in a place meant for healing and balance.

"I am mad," she said, "at the fact that anyone could make this evil choice."

She told attendees that whatever they were feeling, it was all right.

"I believe we will make it through this together," Osteen said. "I believe we begin and end with love."

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