



Seen & Heard: Bullets to Bells

**An event for Gun Violence Healing
July 15, 2023, 4:00 pm
Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church**

**NOTE:
Some content still
work in process
6/5/23**

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For more information contact:

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Witness artist Stephanie Mercedes transform weapons into music.

You are invited to join people gathering for a ceremony of healing from gun violence. Washington, DC based artist Stephanie Mercedes will melt bullet casings and transform them into bells. We will share an experience of communal lament in a tangible, audible, visible way.

4:00 pm	Church bells ring
4:15	Music from interfaith choirs
4:30	Words of lament
4:45	The Melting
5:15	Ringling of bells to honor victims Improvisational Music
5:30	Ringling of bells of hope Bell choirs from churches
5:45	Words of Hope
6:00	Closing



Gun Violence has long lasting impacts on victims and ripples throughout communities and beyond. Art has a way to quiet our inner voices and help us find “*moral sentiments – those instant, aesthetic-like reactions that cause us to feel disgust in the presence of cruelty and admiration in the presence of generosity*” (Brooks, David. *The Power of Art in a Political Age*, New York Times, March 2, 2023). There is also healing power in ritual and lament. Sharing lament in group gatherings helps us slow down to acknowledge grief that does not dissipate.



About Mercedes. Mercedes is an uncategorized Queer Latinx artist who choreographs large scale performances and installations based in sound. Mercedes transforms weapons into musical installations and works of art. Mercedes website is www.stephaniemercedes.com. Read more about Mercedes at: [YouTube](#), Instagram: [mercedes_theartist](#), [Artsy](#), and [District Fray Magazine](#). Mercedes has exhibited and performed at the Bronx Museum, the Queens Museum, the Smithsonian, the Kennedy Center, and the National Gallery of Art. Her most recent project is [Never in Our Image](#), a three-part, queer gun destruction opera, expected to premier in fall 2023.

Sponsors: First Christian Church Disciples of Christ and Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church

Participating Organizations: (still confirming) MomsDemandAction, Bell choirs

Contact Information: Rev. Wendy J. Manuel, RBCC, wendy.manuel@alumni.austinseminary.edu.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is Bullets to Bells?

Bullets to Bells is a gathering intended to bring healing to those traumatized by gun violence through art, music, and public lament. Bullet to Bells is an interfaith event.

What will happen at this event?

DC based artist, Stephanie Mercedes will melt bullet casings and turn them into bells. There will be bell ringing, improvisational music and words honoring victims and words of hope.

Who is Stephanie Mercedes?

Mercedes is an uncategorized Queer Latinx artist who choreographs large scale performances and installations based in sound. Mercedes transforms weapons into musical installations and works of art. Mercedes website is www.stephaniemercedes.com. Mercedes has exhibited and performed at the Bronx Museum, the Queens Museum, the Smithsonian, the Kennedy Center, and the National Gallery of Art.

How can I participate?

There will be opportunities at the event to sing and speak. Spiritual leaders will be present for one-on-one support.

Are there any additional events?

Yes! Mercedes will be giving an artist talk at TBD. She is also installing her piece, [The Ring of Freedom](#) at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church where it may be viewed July 15-October 15, 2023.

How many gun deaths have there been so far in 2023 in Minnesota?

Minnesota has a firearm death rate in 2023 to date of 7.6 per 100,000 residents (World Population Review).

What other resources about gun violence and trauma are available?

Please see these sites: » [Gun Violence \(discipleshomemissions.org\)](http://discipleshomemissions.org), [Helping kids heal from trauma of gun violence \(umnews.org\)](http://umnews.org), [Resources - Moms Demand Action | Moms Demand Action](#) and [Beyond Measure: Gun Violence Trauma | Everytown Research & Policy](#).

Who are the sponsors?

First Christian Church Disciples of Christ and Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church.

How can I get more information?

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Stephanie Mercedes

An artist who transforms weapons into music + art and excavates missing histories.



Mercedes is an uncategorized Queer Latinx artist who choreographs large scale performances and installations based in sound. Mercedes transforms weapons into musical installations and works of art. She also excavates missing violent histories.

Mercedes has exhibited and performed at the Bronx Museum, the Queens Museum, the Smithsonian, the Kennedy Center, and the National Gallery of Art. She has been funded by George Soro's Open Society Foundation, Light Works, NALAC, The Foundation for Contemporary Art, WPA, The DC Commission for the Arts, the

GLB Memorial Foundation, the Warhol Foundation, and the Clarvit Fellowship.

Mercedes has been an artist in residence at: VisArts, Halcyon Art Labs, the Bronx Museum, Montgomery College, Christopher Newport University, SOMA, Lugar a Dudas, Largo das Artes and La Ira de Dios. Mercedes is producing an Opera with CulturalDC in 2022-23.

An example of Mercedes' collaborative work can be seen in [this Bullet to Bells video](#). Her most recent project is *Never in Our Image*, a three-part, queer gun destruction opera, expected to premier in fall 2023.

Mercedes website is: <https://www.stephaniemercedes.com>

Mercedes can be reached at: ornamental.activism.contact@gmail.com

Read more about Mercedes at: [YouTube](#), Instagram: [@mercedes_theartist](#), [Artsy](#), and [District Fray Magazine](#). Listen to a February 2023 [NPR interview with Mercedes](#).

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Importance of Public Lament

Lament is a prayer of grief, speaking for loss, and a solution for silent suffering. Public lament is a participation in the suffering of others, illustrating solidarity in grief. It encompasses pain, hurt, confusion, anger, betrayal, despair, and injustice. It goes beyond your personal relationships to consider how all creation groans to be restored to God.

Public lament in a community gathering is healing.

“Lament is not only for the suffering; it is for solidarity with the suffering. We love our neighbor when we allow their experience of pain to become the substance of our prayer.”

-Theologian N.T. Wright

Lament is necessary because it:

“acknowledges the reality of suffering, acknowledges the complexities of life, corrects the over-emphasis of triumphalism, and is an act of protest.”

- Author and Singer, Michael Card

Gathering to lament, provides opportunity to groan with all of creation to be restored. Humanity has an innate need to be reassured that there are good people who act in and for the goodness of others. Theologian N.T. Wright refers to lament as a prayer “in the meantime,” a prayer while we wait for change with hope.

Sharing lament in group gatherings helps us slow down to acknowledge grief that does not dissipate. It is a ritual to honor those who have gone before and bring hope to those who remain.

“To remember where it hurts, how it got that way, to tell the journey, to honor the pain, not become the story.”

- Rabbi Goldie Milgram

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Gun Violence and Mental Health Fact Sheet

Even from a distance, gun violence can take a toll on your mental health.

"Even if you're not a survivor or bystander, watching it time and time again on your phone or on the headlines can really impact you in ways that I don't think we knew before to be as impactful. It's so 'in our face' all the time and we have access to so much footage, so many pictures, so many videos, so many accounts that we're ingesting it in ways that's really unhealthy for us." (Dr. Riana Elyse Anderson, a psychologist and fellow at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, [CBS News](#))

"We find that school shootings increase absenteeism and grade repetition; reduce high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion; and reduce employment and earnings at ages 24–26." (Cabral, et. al., [Students' Human Capital and Economic Outcomes, 2022](#)).

"Active shooter drills in schools are associated with increases in depression (39%), stress and anxiety (42%), and physiological health problems (23%) overall, including children from as young as five years old up to high schoolers, their parents, and teachers." ([The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools, 2023](#))

Majority of U.S. teens worry a shooting could happen at their school

% of teens saying they are ___ about the possibility of a shooting happening at their school

	Very worried	Somewhat worried	NET
All teens	25	32	57
Boys	22	29	51
Girls	28	35	64
White	20	31	51
Black	27	34	60
Hispanic	37	36	73

Note: Whites and blacks include only single-race non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Figures may not add to net total due to rounding.

Source: Survey of U.S. teens ages 13 to 17 conducted March 7-April 10, 2018.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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Other Things to See and Do (still in process)



Visit **The Ring of Freedom** at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, 511 Groveland Avenue, Minneapolis. **Open July 15 – October 15, 2023.** Hours Open: 9am-6pm Monday- Thursday, 9am-1pm Friday, 8am-12pm Sunday, closed on Saturday.

To create **The Ring of Freedom**, Mercedes melted down a Sig Sauer MCX rifle - the exact rifle used during the Orlando Pulse Club shooting Jun 12, 2016, to make 49 liberty bells for the 49 victims who died. In Latin American culture bells are rung to honor the dead, a liberty bell is also the symbol of the NRA. The names of those who passed are engraved on each bell.

This exhibit is sponsored by Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church.

Possible tie in with "Art is my Weapon Vol.11 'Unburden Yourself.'"? Remount this exhibit somewhere? See: [Submit an Event | MPLSART.COM](#)

Art is My Weapon 2023 Exhibition, nikki@artismyweapon.org, This Exhibition will run in **late summer of 2023 at locations to be determined**



Create "draw your feelings" event for families and youth? SpringHouse? MomsDemandAction?

wearorange
wearorange
wearorange
wearorange
wearorange.org

[MN-Statewide-Welcome to Moms Demand Action](#), St. Paul, July 13, 8:00 PM
Join Moms Demand Action Minnesota for a virtual meetup to meet like-minded volunteers and learn how to get involved in the fight to end gun violence in our state! Link to join the virtual meeting will be sent closer to the event date.

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More Resources

“We just learn how to cope. Trauma never goes anywhere, and healing is an ongoing process—it’s just a lifelong process.”

—A gun violence survivor

Help for Trauma Healing

- Art Therapy (*Wendy to follow up with speaker late June*)
- [Effects of Gun Violence on Mental Health](#), Sheldon Reid, February 27, 2023
- [Healing from the trauma of gun violence](#), Amye Archer, MFA, February 3, 2023

“Much violence is based on the illusion that life is a property to be defended and not to be shared.”

— Henri Nouwen

Good reads

- [A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament](#) by Michael Card, Eugene H Peterson, 2005
- [Beyond Measure: Gun Violence Trauma](#), Everytown Research & Policy, May 27, 2023

Taking Action

- [Events by Moms Demand Action](#)
- [Disciples Resources on the Prevention of Gun Violence](#), Disciples Home Mission
- [Ways United Methodists Can Take a Stand Against Gun Violence](#), The United Methodist Church
- [8 Gun Violence Prevention Organizations You Need To Know](#)

“Acts of senseless violence should not be an acceptable occurrence in any community.”

*— The United Methodist Church
2012*