



## Not In Our Town E News

for ordinary people transforming their communities

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### Take Action Against Hate Now:

Hate crimes are receiving heightened attention these days.

The racial divisions in Jena, Louisiana sparked by nooses hanging from a tree outside the high school; the case of Megan Williams, an African American

woman who was held captive and tortured in West Virginia by six people who taunted her with racial epithets; the noose hung outside Professor Madonna Constantine's office at Columbia Teachers College in New York ...

Crimes like these are a sharp reminder of the bigotry that lies below the surface, but is still strongly felt by many of us in our communities.

We can acknowledge the crimes and feel bad, or we can take action. That's what people are doing all over the country. You can join them. Take action in your town, on your campus, at your school, in your workplace before a hate crime happens. Then [write us](#) and tell us your story. We'll share what you did with the Not In Our Town network so we can all learn from your actions.



Columbia Students rally after a noose is found outside Professor Madonna Constantine's office.



A Not On Our Campus poster from the University of South Alabama.

### Not In Our Hall: Preventing Hate Crimes on Campus

As [Columbia University rallies](#) to oppose the noose found outside Professor Madonna Constantine's office, students at UC Santa Barbara are taking a proactive stand against hate and bigotry. Next month, UCSB will hold it's third annual Not In Our Hall campaign, a series of screenings and conversations to help residents of on-campus housing to build hate free communities.

"People living in the residence halls are first year, often coming right out of high school, so we use Not In Our Hall to set the tone," says Jessica Farley, an Assistant Resident Director who helps administer

the NIOH program as part of the UCSB staff.

The program is run by Resident Assistants (RAs) out of UCSB's residence halls. The RAs pass out buttons, hold meetings and events, and screen Not In Our Town for their residents. Afterwards, professors from a variety of departments facilitate discussions about the film, and call on students to take a pledge against hate. The students then

post the pledge cards on their doors.

"We house all of our incoming first year students, and now we have Not In Our Hall in all our residence halls, so in time every student that comes to UCSB will have this experience and it will touch the entire campus," says Assistant Resident Director Stephanie Malcolm.

Stephanie and Jessica were both part of Not In Our Hall in 2005, when they were seniors living on campus and working as Resident Assistants. Now they are overseeing Not In Our Hall, which has grown from a pilot program running in just two of the residence halls to a campus-wide activity that reaches an estimated 5,000 students.

Not In Our Hall was brought to UCSB from Michigan State University, where it was started by an RA named Abby Priehs. Later she came to work at UCSB as a Resident Director and she brought Not In Our Hall with her. In the past, Not On Our Campus campaigns have been held at several other universities and colleges, including Texas A&M, University of South Alabama, Princeton and the University of British Columbia.

"I think Not In Our Town has become very important to our campus," says Jessica. "It shows us how a community can come together to create a proactive environment where diversity and tolerance are promoted."

This summer, a group of UCSB students presented the Not In Our Hall program to their peers at the conference of the National Association of College and University Residence Halls--a student-run organization that connects 400 schools in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Australia. UCSB student Erica Rangel gave a presentation, including excerpts of the film and a workshop on how other schools could stage their own Not In Our Hall campaigns. You can see the report students wrote about Not In Our Hall for the conference [here](#).

### Watching West Virginia

NIOT E News readers around the country sent messages of support for community leaders in Logan County, a hilly, rural area where police say Megan Williams was held captive and tortured last month.

[The messages](#) were sent to Megan's family and local leaders.

"It's always helpful to know that someone else feels the way you do. We really appreciate the messages of support," says Joan Hairston, who works with the Logan County Improvement League, a group of mostly African American Citizens who are active in Logan County.

The Logan County Improvement League wants to show the Governor of West Virginia that the country is watching. **You can [sign the petition](#) to tell the governor to speak out against the brutality committed against Megan Williams.**

Logan County citizens came together October 2 in a Big Creek church for a candlelight vigil to honor Williams and discuss issues of racism in Logan County. West Virginia Public Radio did a remarkable [story](#) that captured the scene at the vigil. Other events include a planned showing of Not In Our Town, and a recent forum about hate crimes at West Virginia University College of Law.



People gathered for a vigil in honor of Megan Williams in Big Creek, West Virginia.

[You can read excerpts of the letters to Logan County here.](#)

### Jena, LA

A series of [disturbing events](#) began in Jena, Louisiana, when nooses were hung on a tree at the local high school. Now, as [copycat cases](#) are occurring with nooses being found in schools and workplaces around the country, Jena is fast becoming [a symbol of racial inequality](#).

Many states have hate crime statutes that would have made the original incident of hanging nooses at Jena High School a prosecutable offense. Local law enforcement and school leaders are crucial players in how incidents like this are treated.

**What would you do if nooses or swastikas appeared in your town or your school, and how can we create community strategies to prevent the next Jena?** Please send us examples of how your community has taken action when hate symbols have threatened your neighbors, and what you are doing now to help young people grapple with these issues.

Click [here](#) to see how the small town of Anderson, CA responded when a cross was burned on an African American family's lawn.



### Not In Our School Update

Mountain View, Los Altos and St. Francis High Schools in Silicon Valley, CA, are kicking off a Not In Our School campaign with an event November 15 at Los Altos High School, featuring a screening and discussion of Not In Our Town Northern California, and a student art show.

### Letters to Logan County

Although I live far from West Virginia, I and thousands of Americans are watching, horrified by the crimes committed against Megan Williams... In the midst of the sadness and shame this has brought to Logan County and West Virginia, you now have the opportunity to speak out against the racial hatred that exists in many American communities, not just yours. You don't know us personally, but we are out here. We support you.

Jamie Stobie

Even though the racist actions were committed only by a few, unless there is a loud outcry from everyone else, the entire community becomes complicit. Silence is what allowed the Nazis to prevail in Germany. To make matters worse, the Jena 6 trials are happening at the same time, making it clear that racism is still a powerful, ugly force in our society. Healing will come through your voices and actions that say "Not in This Town." ...You will give strength to other communities to do the same, just as you can draw strength from those that have done this before... Judy Kirmmse

To the Logan Improvement League, this is Reiko Callner, in Olympia, Washington, and I've been stunned with the unspeakably monstrous nature of the crimes perpetuated against Ms. Williams. My heart goes out to her and I devoutly wish that she can know that hundreds and thousands of people are saddened and wish to comfort and cherish her... In Olympia we have suffered some hate crimes, and our community has organized in many ways to express its true nature and its rejection of the brutality and hatred manifest in hate crimes... If we can be of support to you by sharing our examples or otherwise, we are ready and eager...

Reiko Callner Unity in the Community, Olympia Washington

First I would like to express my sincere sympathy to the family and friends of Ms Williams. Secondly I would like to express my sympathy to the town of Logan. They are now at a crossroad in their history. They can choose to examine their community and take responsibility for the hatred that exist there and work for change and they can do something to make the situation a starting point for COMMUNITY OUTRAGE AND ACTION. You are probably wondering why I suggest that the community examine themselves. Well, I am a member of the Not In Our Town-Newark, California. In our community we had a transgendered youth who lived in Newark, brutally murdered by members of that very same community. When this happened to us, it was easy to think of it as a crime that occurred because three evil young men took out their anger on a transgendered person however we realized that as a community their hatred and prejudice had been permitted to exist in our community and we had all but ignored it. We examined ourselves and realize that if change were to occur it would have to happen because we took responsibility. At that moment we organized... I will not go into a long story about our success, although it has taken us over 5 years, but I will tell you that recently the city joined the National League of Cities which is a program that promotes the inclusion of all people within the community and empowers them to participate with the city to make it a better community... Please know that I am with you and your community in prayer and spirit.

Pat Skillen

Not In Newark, Newark CA

The Not in Our Town project has made such positive impact in our area, I hope that you'll see a similar emergence of loving support among neighbors against such senseless hate.

With concern,  
Nancy Wittels

I would like to express my support for those folks in Logan County who are standing up and trying to address the causes of racism in their area... I know it takes courage, but I would urge all the citizens of Logan County to say "not in our town" to racism and violence. Peace,  
Kit Everts

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