



## Not In Our Town E News

March 2007

a project of The Working Group

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### Columbia, MO Says "Not In Our Town" to Neo Nazis

Columbia residents had only a week's notice this month that the National Socialist Movement (NSM), a neo Nazi group, was planning to march through their downtown streets. This group of white supremacists required a careful response: NSM rallies around the country have resulted in violent confrontations, including a riot in Toledo, Ohio where dozens were injured and arrested.

With the clock ticking, civic, university, and religious leaders in Columbia began to mobilize. At several quickly called meetings, citizens agreed they needed to balance the NSM's rights to free speech, however odious, with the need for a broad, clear response that showed hate would not be tolerated in Columbia. Nanette Chun Ming Ward, who attended the NIOT gathering last October, and her colleagues at the Human Rights Commission quickly ordered 800 NIOT buttons and created T shirts that said "Not In Our Town, No Hate in Columbia, MO."

### Connecting Communities

The Missourian, daily newspaper in Columbia based at the University of Missouri provided [extensive coverage](#) of the community response in Columbia, as well as [reports from other cities where the NSM held protests](#).

Nanette Chun Ming Ward helped to make connections between Columbia residents and people she met at the NIOT National Gathering. Columbia leaders received support and encouragement from their counterparts in Olympia, Washington at the request of Unity In the Community Olympia, the Washington state group that coordinated their community's response to NSM rallies in 2006. Through the NIOT Network, Columbia's Mayor Duane Hindman was reconnected with former Billings, Montana Mayor Chuck Tooley, who had his own experiences with white supremacists groups in Montana.

Like the Olympians, a coalition of Columbia groups decided to hold their own event during the NSM march, giving citizens a way to show their opposition to the neo Nazis' message of hate while avoiding a direct confrontation. They began to plan a diversity picnic in Douglass park.

In the early morning hours of March 10, before the scheduled appearance of neo Nazis, 20 clergy members from churches, synagogues and spiritual centers in Columbia marched a path through downtown urging a peaceful response to the Nazi presence.

About 20 neo Nazis marched through the streets of Columbia, taunting hundreds of bystanders and counter protesters. The crowd was largely peaceful, though 7 people were arrested during the 45 minute march. In the meantime, hundreds of Columbia residents had assembled in the park to celebrate their community values of diversity, unity and inclusion.

Since the NSM's march, there have been several screenings of Not In Our Town films and community discussions about how Columbia can turn the crisis of a neo Nazi march into an opportunity for new connections and ways to fight hate in their town.

[Read about the NSM march and response](#)

[See a slide show of photos from the NSM march and diversity picnic](#)

[More photos and information](#)

*photo courtesy of KOMU News*

**Wat**

**Watch this short shocking video**

An Urgent Message from a Young  
Filmmaker

And Thoughts from an Educator in the  
NIOT Network

### **Young Filmmaker's Documentary Shows Danger of "Stereotype Threat"**

17-year-old Kari Davis' "A Girl Like Me" looks at how African American children and young people internalize race, beauty and value by recreating the "doll test"--the 1954 experiment that showed a majority of African American children thought white dolls were "nicer" than black dolls.

[See an excerpt of "A Girl like Me:](#)

<http://www.komotv.com/home/video/5001856.html?video=YHI&t=a>



NIOT activist and educator Becki Cohn Vargas first called our attention to this video. Those of you who were at the Gathering last October may remember Becki, who gave a presentation about "Stereotype Threat," a new theory about the role that stereotypes play in the academic performance of minority students.

Please take a minute to watch an excerpt of this video and read what Becki writes about Stereotype threat below.

[See an excerpt of "A Girl like Me:](http://www.komotv.com/home/video/5001856.html?video=YHI&t=a)

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*The video you are about to watch underscores the need to continue the work to create equity and social justice in our society, and particularly in our education system. Stereotypes and biases are still all around us. Even in the absence of stereotypes, a phenomenon called stereotype threat, which is the fear of being negatively stereotyped, causes people to perform at lower levels when they were afraid of being judged by their race. [Read more about this theory \(On Thin Ice by Claude Steele\)](#). The antidote to stereotype threat is identity safety, which is a concept where teachers create conditions for students of color to feel safe, to be themselves, and to achieve at high levels based on the assumption that each student is competent and capable. The overarching goals of identity safety are:*

- *Valuing all students and what they bring from their background*
- *Creating opportunities to build a community where every student belongs and makes friends across racial groups*
- *Providing challenge and promise for students to achieve their personal and academic potential*
- *Reflecting the students' lives and experiences in the classroom*

*We need to remember that while it is important to not discriminate based on color, being colorblind does not actually eliminate stereotypes and stereotype threat in a society where even preschoolers are affected by bias. We need to create identity safety and equal status in our schools, beginning with our youngest children.*

*- Becki Cohn Vargas, Palo Alto Unified School District  
Palo Alto, CA*

## Join the conversation on the NIOT Message Boards!

Not In Our Town has a new message board at [www.forums.theworkinggroup.org](http://www.forums.theworkinggroup.org). Lately we have seen a need for a central pipeline of advice and ideas. The forums can be a powerful tool to bring this network together to share strategies. Here's how to register for the forums:

- Log on to [www.forums.theworkinggroup.org](http://www.forums.theworkinggroup.org)
- Click on the "Register" button just below the NIOT logo.
- Create a user name and password.
- After you have registered, click on "Not In Our Town Movement" (under the headline Public Discussion Forums). You can respond to the posts that are there or create a new topic.

Once you're on the boards, we also encourage you to sign up for the email digest. The digest will send the latest postings directly to your email, keeping you up to speed on the conversation (to sign up, click "digest" on the navigation bar just under the NIOT logo).

**We look forward to learning what you are facing in your town now, and seeing you engage with others to help solve problems.**

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