



Not In Our Town E News

July 2007

a newsletter for the NIOT movement,
a network of ordinary citizens transforming their communities

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Not In Our World: NIOT Goes To Ukraine

In May, the NIOT film crew traveled to Ukraine to help introduce the Not In Our Town model to grassroots groups in the countries of the former Soviet Union (CIS) and begin work on a new documentary--Not In Our Town: Ukraine. The NIOT program is being initiated by Project Keshet, the largest Jewish women's organization in the CIS and one of the fastest growing women's advocacy and human rights organizations in the region. Our film crew covered [Project Keshet's Summit on the Black Sea](#), where leaders from throughout the region unveiled their Not In Our Town plans, designed to address tension and hate violence that are on the rise their communities.

Hate crimes in Ukraine are [escalating at an alarming rate](#). Working with local journalists and activists, we went to Kyiv, L'viv and Simferopol to document reports of escalating violence, but also to tell stories of people who are finding ways to respond to a rise in intolerance.

Learn more about Project Keshet [here](#). Please [contact us](#) if you would like to support the NIOT film work in Ukraine.

Gay Youth Murdered in Greenville, SC

The police say that Sean Kennedy was killed because he was gay, but his attacker is unlikely to face hate crime charges.

The 20-year-old was leaving a club in Greenville, South Carolina, when an assailant reportedly called him



a series of slurs, then punched him. He fell to the ground with enough force that he later died of head injuries. Witnesses identified 18-year-old Stephen Moller as the attacker. As Moller left the scene, he allegedly phoned one of Kennedy's friends and left her a voicemail: ["tell your faggot friend he owes me \\$500 for my broken hand."](#)

Greenville authorities charged Moller with murder, and they confirm that Kennedy was targeted because of his sexual orientation. The warrant for Moller's arrest stated the attack was ["a result of the defendant not liking the sexual identity of the victim"](#). However, Moller has not been charged with a hate crime. South Carolina is one of only [5 states that do not have hate crimes legislation of any kind](#). Though local police have referred the case to the FBI for investigation, federal hate crimes laws do not cover gay, lesbian or transgender victims.

In South Carolina, homosexuality and hate crime legislation are considered controversial by some residents. But this brutal crime is awakening a powerful debate.

Last month, Jim Hennigan, a self-described "lifelong republican," weighed in on the issue in his column in the Greenville Beat, exploring how Kennedy's death had changed his thinking about hate crime. Here at NIOT, we came to know Hennigan when he helped lead Greenville County to [officially recognize the Martin Luther King Junior Holiday](#). You may also remember him from the [2006 NIOT National Gathering](#). Here's an excerpt from his provocative column:

So many opponents of "hate crime" laws think they're offensive - in a remarkably perverse way - because the victims of "hate crimes" get "better treatment" after being raped, attacked - or even killed. As if to ask, "Why should Sean Kennedy's murder be avenged by stronger laws simply because he's gay?"

I have to admit that this question troubled me the most. Why should the typical "hate crime" victim classes be protected by stronger criminal laws? That doesn't seem fair - let alone constitutional. But the preposterous notion that a dead man would get "preferential treatment" made me realize that it's not the direct victim of a "hate crime" that benefits from the law. It's the people who live and who were collaterally attacked - and who the perpetrator fully intended to attack collaterally - who make these crimes different in a meaningful way.

You can read Hennigan's whole column [here](#).

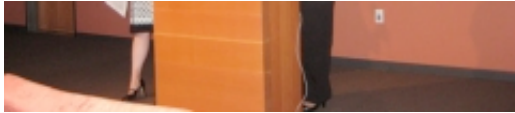
Since the death of her son, Elke Kennedy has become an [outspoken advocate for hate crime laws](#). In March, state Rep. Seth Whipper, D-Charleston, introduced a bill, H3738, that makes it a felony to threaten or harass someone on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, race, religion, age or ethnic background. A similar bill is in the state senate.

We'll keep you posted on how things develop in Greenville.



NIOT 2.0

In other news, we just completed a 10 days at [BAVC](#) for [The Producer's Institute for New Media](#), a web 2.0 development institute for PBS producers sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. During this [heady experience](#), we created a prototype of the Not In Our Town Social Network--an online community where civic leaders, organizers, activists and



concerned citizens can exchange strategies and stories, watch and upload videos, learn more about the issue of intolerance and get tools to take action.

We are excited to develop this new resource, which we hope will engage communities that are already active in our network, as well as a new group of web users looking for tools to fight hate in their towns.

A Great Opportunity for Local Anti-Hate Groups

The Case Foundation is offering grants to citizens who are making a difference in their communities. The initiative is called the [Make-It-Your-Own Awards](#), and it means individuals and local organizations to can make up to \$35,000 their own for local projects. NIOT community groups are a textbook example of powerful, localized, collaborative community work. We strongly encourage members of the NIOT network to apply for these grants. Here's what to do: fill out brief application online and submit it before August 8. From there, the top 100 finalists will each receive \$100, and be asked to submit a longer application. Then the foundation will select 24 finalists to receive between \$10,000 and \$35,000 each. We hope you will take advantage of this great opportunity, and we'd love to help! If you'd like to apply, please feel free to [contact us](#).



NIOT Member-Group Updates

Prince William County, VA: New Anti-Immigration Law Challenges Unity

Local lawmakers in Prince William County made [national headlines](#) in mid-July when they passed a controversial ordinance that forces police, librarians and other country workers to ask residents about their immigration status before providing public services. In this deeply divided county, a group called Unity in the Community has been working for over a decade to address hate violence. You may have met them at the NIOT Gathering last year, where they shared a very moving story: in 2006, Unity members responded to the hate crime murder of Seraphin Negrate, whose attackers admitted that they were targeting a Latino immigrant. The groups organized ecumenical services for Seraphin, and raised money to send his body home to his family in Mexico. At that time they also began working with law enforcement to talk about how to make the town safer. Now, with the challenge of this new law and the national attention it has garnered, Unity members are evaluating what to do next. In the midst of this controversy, they are stressing that regardless of differing views on immigration policy, everyone should be safe from violence.

Pennsylvania Unity Network: Building Inclusive Communities

The Pennsylvania Network of Unity Coalitions is joining the National League of Cities' [Partnership for Working Toward Inclusive Communities](#). Dennis Biancuzzo, who chairs the state-wide network of coalitions, is working with cities and organizations throughout the state to spread the word, in hopes of making Pennsylvania the first state in the nation to get every city to commit to being an "Inclusive Community." Learn more [here](#) at his site.

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