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## Education is the solution to hate crimes: C. Virginia Fields

**By Gloria Medina, *El Diario / La Prensa*, 18 August 2005. Translated from Spanish by Hillary Hawkins.**

For the second time, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields met with a group of leaders to seek solutions to the problem of hate crimes.

Fields said in the meeting on Wednesday that education at an earlier age would be the solution to this problem.

Mohammad Razvi, executive director of the Council of Peoples organization, pointed out that the most immediate way to prevent more hate crimes would be to send the message to adults committing crimes.

"Our children are not born to hate. They learn it. We can prevent them from learning to hate. For bigger children, if they have learned it, they can learn to forget it. This is what we are trying to do through various programs," said Fields, referring to her interest in the program the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) directed in New York City by Joel Levy. "Programs that help to educate students at an early age help to prevent them from committing hate crimes in the future," said Fields.

"The culture of hate is destroying our society," said Levy. "That's why we've contacted the Department of Education so that they establish preschool education programs in the schools."

"We give workshops for parents and teachers and we offer didactic materials in collaboration with Sesame Street, in order to offer the opportunity to recognize and interrupt the presence of prejudice and discrimination," said Liz Fernandez, coordinator of the preschool Anti-defamation League (ADL) program. "Six-month-old children recognize differences and at two they behave according to those perceptions."

According to Fields, a general concern of the organizations is the lack of funds, even with cost being minimal, between \$1,500 and \$5,000.

Razvi commented that after the August 7 racial attack in Brooklyn, he and members of other organizations got together and walked through the place where the incident occurred.

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"We have to demonstrate that we are united, that we won't tolerate these types of crimes and that we're going to fight so that it doesn't happen again," said Razvi, who proposed another walk with the slogan, "We're all New Yorkers," which is supported by Fields. "If something happens to a person, it affects all of our communities and we're not going to tolerate it. New York is the most diverse city in the world and that's why we have to unite so that New York's beauty doesn't cease to exist," he said.

Dominicans 2000, a community organization directed by Ydanis Rodriguez, also presented its summer project which was carried out by 12 youngsters, who surveyed 1,000 people between the ages of nine and 20 from Harlem, Washington Heights and the Bronx.

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## Fields busca luchar contra crimen de odio

Gloria Medina/edlp

Nueva York — La presidenta del condado de Manhattan y un grupo de líderes se reunieron ayer, por segunda vez, para buscar soluciones al problema de los crímenes de odio.

Virginia Fields opinó en la reunión que la educación a temprana edad acerca de este problema sería la solución. Mohammad Razvi, director ejecutivo de la organización Consejo de Personas, señaló por su parte que la acción inmediata para prevenir más crímenes de odio sería llevar el mensaje de a los adultos que lo están cometiendo.

“Nuestros niños no nacen para odiar. Ellos lo aprenden. Podemos prevenir que aprendan a odiar. Para niños más grandes, si lo han aprendido, ellos lo pueden olvidar. Esto es lo que tratamos de hacer a través de varios programas”, enfatizó Fields, por lo que se interesó en el programa de la Liga Anti-Difamación (ADL), dirigida en la ciudad de Nueva York por Joel Levy. “Los programas que ayudan a educar a los estudiantes a una temprana edad, ayudan a prevenir que comenten crímenes de odio en el futuro”, indicó Fields.

“La cultura de odio esta destruyendo nuestra sociedad”, indicó Levy. “Por eso, hemos contactado al Departamento de Educación para que establezcan programas como educación pre escolar en escuelas”.

“Damos talleres para padres y maestros, ofrecemos materiales didácticos en colaboración con Sesame Street, para ofrecer la oportunidad de reconocer e interrumpir la presencia de prejuicio y discriminación”, indicó Liz Fernández, coordinadora del programa pre escolar en ADL. “A los seis meses, los niños reconocen diferencias y a los dos años empiezan a actuar de acuerdo a esas diferencias”.

Según Fields, una de las preocupaciones en general de las organizaciones es la falta de fondos, y el costo es mínimo entre 1,500 y 5,000 dólares.

Por otro lado, Razvi expresó que después del ataque racial en Brooklyn el pasado 7 de agosto, se unió con otros miembros de diferentes organizaciones y caminaron por el lugar donde había ocurrido el incidente.

“Tenemos que demostrar que Estamos Unidos, que no toleramos esta clase de crímenes y vamos a luchar para que no vuelva a suceder”, dijo Razvi, quien propuso una nueva caminata con el lema “Todos somos neoyorquinos”, al que la presidenta apoyó. “Si algo pasa a un individuo, nos afecta a todas las comunidades y no lo vamos a tolerar. Nueva York es la ciudad más diversa del mundo y por eso nos tenemos que unir, o sino vamos a terminar con la belleza de Nueva York”.

Dominicanos 2000, dirigido por Ydanis Rodríguez, también tuvo la oportunidad de presentar el proyecto de verano, que fue realizado por 12 jóvenes, quienes hicieron una encuesta a mil personas entre las edades de 9 a 20 años, de Harlem, Washington Hights y El Bronx.

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