

# Awareness of hatred, bigotry is first step to ending them

## Editor:

Last Thursday evening, Jan. 7, I felt honored to be part of the studio audience at WVIA for the live television presentation "The Shenandoah Six — will the Feds Make it Right?"

The program focused on the federal indictments handed down as a result of the beating death of Luis Ramirez in July 2008.

Host Suzanne Kapral-Kelly did a masterful job of facilitating the dialogue among presenters: Barry Morrison, Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League, Philadelphia; Amilcar Arroyo, Editor, El Mensajero Media, Hazleton; Rodrigo Gereda, Chief Facilitator, Peace & Justice Center, and Arthur Breese, NEPA Diversity Education Consortium.

The beating death of Mr. Ramirez by two teenagers because he was Hispanic is inexcusable, just as any beating death would be.

I found it disturbing to learn that there was a police cover-up to shield the teens from prosecution.

Four Shenandoah police officers, including the chief of police, have resigned.

It was equally disturbing to hear Mr. Ramirez's fiancé, Crystal Dillman, say via telephone that she and their two children have moved away from Shenandoah to escape death threats.

The presenters made it very clear that, although there is an underlying current of bigotry in the Shenandoah community, the majority of the residents are welcoming and accepting.

On the WVIA program a question was posed asking what residents can do if they witness a hate crime or are aware of a hate group meeting in our area.

The Wyoming Valley Interfaith Council is hosting a series of dialogues on the theme "Overcoming the Challenges of Hatred and Bigotry in our Community."

The second in a series of three dialogues, "Uncovering Hate Groups," will be held on Sunday, Jan. 31, at 6 p.m. at Temple B'nai B'rith, Wyoming Ave., Kingston.

Luzerne County District Attorney Jacqueline Musto-Carroll and Nancy K. Baron-Baer, Associate Regional Director of the Eastern PA/Delaware Region of the Anti-Defamation League will discuss what "groups" are operating in our area, how we promote awareness while not bringing publicity to them, what is actively being done to monitor, observe, or hinder their objectives, and what we, as individuals, can do.

The ADL provides guidance and leadership to individuals, groups and institutions throughout the area in fighting bigotry and discrimination and promoting intergroup relations.

Silence implies complicity, whereas awareness gives us that first tool necessary to stand up against such reprehensible deeds.

This event is free and open to the public.

A time for questions and answers will follow the presentations.

The Interfaith Council encourages residents to attend and be educated in this very timely topic.

**Rev. Ann Marie Acacio**  
President

**Wyoming Valley Interfaith Council**