

## HRC takes stand on Nazi march

EVANSTON-The Evanston Human Relations Commission (HRC) was established to help create a community where all individuals have an opportunity to grow, to participate and to share to the best their ability in every aspect of community life. The underlying assumption of such a mission is the intrinsic value placed on each and every individual human being. We are called to care about and to serve everyone, giving special attention to those whose human rights have been historically ignored or are presently in jeopardy.

A situation currently exists in our area which addresses both our community goals and the humane value which underlie them. The proposed demonstration in Skokie by a small group of Nazis shows us that hatred, fear, vengeance and outrage persist in our society, and probably always will. Such emotions have been inflamed to a new intensity by news coverage and will doubtless be inflamed still further. The challenge to us in such an environment is to develop a plan for coping with the shortcomings of our world-not by reacting to crises, but by acting positively on the basis of our humane values. Three levels of thoughtful action are suggested:

\*As individuals, we need to search our own hearts for any remnant of racism, sexism, or any other -ism which discriminates on the basis of irrelevant personal characteristics. Individually we need to challenge ourselves to grow, to expand our vision, and to take affirmative action in caring for all people. In the present situation, for those who wish to express openly their care and concern, such affirmative action might include sending personal statements to Skokie residents and leaders, explaining their opposition to Nazism and similar movements; it might include wearing armbands, displaying the Star of David, as we

go about our usual business on the day of the Nazi demonstration; or it might include attendance at a solidarity rally...well before the Nazi demonstration later in the spring.

\*We should also ask those who are close to us personally to consider the conflict between prejudice and caring for all people. Family and friends can support one another in their mutual efforts to identify and eradicate their own prejudices, and search together for affirmative ways to act out "valuing all people." Instead of listening to extensive news coverage of the Nazi demonstration, families might spend the time together discussing their own values and goals for the community. Children learn best by mimicking their elders, so our individual and group behavior is crucial in establishing the norms and expectations of the next generation.

\*Larger groups to which we belong also need to be challenged to take constructive action in building a better community. On the day of the Nazi demonstration, houses of worship might be opened as sanctuaries for those in need of spiritual refuge. Schools might include discussion of the issues raised by the demonstration in appropriate curricula. The news media should recognize and deal responsibly with their potential for making doomsday prophecies self-fulfilling.

Community groups of all kinds should take this opportunity to lead in their affirmation of and rededication to the values and vision of a humane community. Silence or preoccupation with day-to-day tasks, when the values which underlie our society are being threatened, is a lost opportunity to reaffirm what we are for. Not whom we are for (or against) but what. What are our values, our goals, our vision? Those things can be said at any time, but they are usually not heard unless they are at issue. Let us speak out now on those questions, encourage all citizens to consider the issues,

and take whatever constructive and responsible action the situation allows.

**Jill W. Graham**  
**Human Relations Commission**

(Editors note: The preceding letter is a position statement the HRC passed at a recent meeting.)