

This is the beginning of **National Crime Victims' Rights Week**, the first day of a nationwide tribute to those affected by the violence that runs like a cancer through our communities and our nation.

For those intimately touched by it, the pain of violence is not a single week – each day they must find a reason to calm the raging waters.

Each statistic tossed about coldly in the media and in political speeches symbolizes a warm body pulsating with the blood of life which, just as a candle in the wind, was blown out by the violence that we allow to live among us.

These bodies, now spirits, watch us from the wings and encourage us to create safe, non-violent, loving environments. These ever-present spirits wait for the day of celebration with honor - a community where all of us recognize our responsibility to each other and refuse to allow the violent acts of our world to go unnoticed or unchallenged.

## Violence . . .

domestic violence  
verbal violence  
emotional violence  
racial violence  
religious violence  
physical violence  
gender violence  
GLOBAL violence . . .

resides in a context that allows, tolerates, perpetuates the oppression of "other-mindedness" -

*anything not like myself  
that makes me uncomfortable  
that isn't the way I would do it  
that doesn't look like me  
that doesn't like the things I like  
that I fear*

that "other mindedness" . . . . . it is what jokes are made out of  
it is what hitting is made out of  
it is what dismissal is made out of  
it is where harassment originates  
it is where bullying begins  
**and tragic deaths result**

## Oppression

feeds violence with its need to control. Oppression is the antithesis of community. In fact, it is the death of community. None of us is immune to this cancer; it runs through us all. Oppression is not just "out there" – in society or in our institutions – it is in here – in our minds and hearts.

## Fear

is the root of oppression that infects our minds and hearts. It tarnishes our communication with each other. By the creation of communities built on acceptance, respect, compassion and most of all love, fear dissolves. It is simple - in the spirit of Love no one feels alone and vulnerable. Love and fear cannot reside in the same space.

## Hope

is what ignites our love in those dark hours – hope kept alive by each one of us, holding fast to the belief that our sorrow is recognized and that each one of us has the strength, the patience and the passion to change our fear into love.

*we must LOVE each other . . .*

extend ourselves not just in the dark times but also in the light.

We are healing our shattered communities by creating new ways to be in communion.

Let us hold each other close and reassure each other that we will not leave anyone alone and vulnerable – that we will not be silent, that we will remember that what happens to one happens to us all, that we will continue to cultivate tenderness, that we will not allow fear to control us, and that . . .

*by loving we honor those lives we have lost*



excerpted from a speech delivered by **Dr. Ednita Wright, Ph.D., LCSW, of VERA HOUSE** at the **Crime Victims' Memorial Ceremony** Sunday . April 23, 2006 . St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Syracuse [www.verahouse.org](http://www.verahouse.org)