

JULY 2, 2000

**STATEMENT BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EVANSTON -- FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH**

EVANSTON, IL -- Our community grows stronger every day because, through our action, we have committed ourselves to implementing the values that we all hold dear. Tonight's memorial service is an example of such action. It not only helps our healing process, but it also gives voice to our shared commitment to stand together against any and all acts of hate. I want to congratulate the organizers of this Memorial Service, and I also want to praise Mrs. Byrdsong for her commitment to building a safe community. It is through your efforts that we will make a difference. Last July 4th, while families and communities were celebrating the birth of our great nation, a man with a gun changed our community forever.

Tonight, we are here to remember and celebrate the lives of Ricky Byrdsong and Woo-Joon Yoon. Ricky Byrdsong was a loving husband to Sherialyn and a devoted father to Sabrina, Kelley and Ricky, Jr. He was a leader in the community, and a man of deep religious faith. In Bloomington, Indiana, Woo-Joon Yoon, an Asian doctoral student at Indiana University, was killed as he was leaving a Korean church with a group of friends.

In addition, we are also here to recall the terror felt by the other victims whose lives were irrevocably changed that weekend. Shots were fired at six Jewish men peacefully observing the Sabbath and an Asian couple sitting in their car. These people were targeted not because of anything any of them had done, but because of their race, ethnicity, and religion.

We are blessed to live in a community enriched by its diversity. As your Representative in Congress, I am committed to making our neighborhoods and streets safe for our children and our families. We must pass common sense gun safety legislation and expand the Hate Crimes Prevention Act to punish those who target victims based on gender, disability or sexual orientation.

I am proud to be a part of this community-- a community overflowing with activists who are committed to working for peace, for social justice, and for the protection of all people, no matter who they are, how they look, or where they worship.