



"I'm committed to decreasing trauma and violence in the city of Newark -- helping to create a trauma informed city. I believe we can do it ourselves. We can police our own neighborhoods and find ways to fund those opportunities."

Ms. LaKeesha Eure is the Director of Violence & Prevention Programs for the city of Newark and Department of Health and Community Wellness—which includes domestic violence, community violence, and sexual violence.

LaKeesha Eure: A Grassroots Leader Creating Healing Opportunities for Men and Victims of Crime

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Mayor Ras Baraka along with [various key organizations, funders](#), and grassroots leaders are diligently working to help the city of Newark become a 'Trauma-Informed City.' The Trauma-Informed Care movement is about building capacity in people, organizations, systems, and communities that cultivates a better understanding of trauma to effectively serve children and families impacted by stress and adversity. **This work is also happening in cities like [Philadelphia, PA](#).**

Ms. LaKeesha Eure, Director of the Office of Violence Prevention in the Department of Health and Community Wellness for the City of Newark and longtime Chair of the [Newark Anti-Violence Coalition](#), is a respected grassroots leader highly committed to reducing violence in the community. Her firsthand experience with shootings and murders is the what fuels her purpose as a dedicated social worker creating change for victims of violence, both men and women.

My Brother's Keeper Newark interviewed Ms. Eure to highlight her leadership and how she is focuses on shifting the narrative to also view males as victims of violence and impacted by trauma.

Q: Ms. Eure, you do so much. What's going on in your world?

A: I do this work from a grassroots community level... I am doing work at the Shani Baraka Women's Resource Center around domestic violence and sexual violence for women who've been affected and exposed and also with the West Ward Victims Outreach Program, which serves men who have been victims of violence and crime, who've experienced any type of trauma.

We are working diligently to intervene in the cycle of violence so that victims don't become perpetrators and perpetrators don't become victims. We're doing an aggressive intervention around that for mental health. We have social workers, substance abuse counselors, job developers, grief counselors and offer all sorts of services for people who walk into the Shani Baraka Center or the Men's center. We refer them out if they need employment and we try to take care of their basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, transportation) so that we can help them with any of their other needs."

Q: Why is it important to focus on males as victims and how is that work evolving?

A: A lot of time males and young men don't get the help that they need. Many of them don't want to be seen as victims after they've been victimized and so they don't return to the hospital to follow up on their medical care. They don't go for mental health services or emotional support. The program is funded through the Department of Justice and it's a huge play so that men can have a place to go. **Men need their own safe haven. Men need to know that it's okay to get help. It's okay to access help.** The West Ward Victims Outreach Program has outreach workers and social workers who work aggressively to support men who have been victimized.

Q: Have you seen a shift in the city of Newark, especially since Mayor Ras Baraka came into office?

A: There has been a shift. The mayor is grassroots. He comes from community organizing and understands what's happening in terms of community violence and domestic violence. The Shani Baraka Center was his part of his idea and he was a part of the Newark Anti Violence Coalition around community violence. He has been pushing, and pushing, and pushing violence prevention. He's getting the law enforcement and police officers to see things from a trauma-informed place and getting them trained in trauma-informed care. He's been putting resources and supporting The Newark Community Street Team and elevating that voice around public safety and putting together this Brick City Peace Collective, which is for all anti-violence programs to work collectively together... **Mayor Baraka has been supporting violence prevention work from the time he's been a principal to a community organizer to a city councilman and now through his Mayorship. The Mayor is putting in a tremendous amount of resources, time, and ideas around violence prevention.**

Q: What is the message that you want to share with folks in Newark and beyond?

A: June the 15, 2019 we did an event called '[**Kings Stop Killing Kings**](#)' at the Terrace Ballroom (Newark Symphony Hall) where **we brought together community and people who are leaders in the community and in the streets to begin creating an agreement around ways that we can keep the community safe and problem solve.**

We have [**Mysonne, a rap activist out in New York**](#), leading the charge and touring on the heels of Nipsey Hussle being killed due to gang violence. We're getting people to come together beyond gang violence... and gathering ideas on ways to stop it. How can we mediate? How can we create conflict resolution? How can we create places that are safe havens in the community that allow people to do conflict resolution before resorting to violence?

That event is now a movement. It wasn't just a one-day event. We're now going into the neighborhoods and talking to them and helping them create ongoing safe places and mediation places, not just a one-day event but a movement.

We can do it ourselves. We can police our own neighborhoods and find ways to fund those opportunities.

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