



Erica Gilmore Remarks For the Inaugural "A Night Among the Stars" Gala

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Robert Sherrill, for your vision and leadership throughout Davidson County -- and thank you all for being here this evening. It's an honor and privilege to join you for the inaugural "A Night Among the Stars" Gala to celebrate the groundbreaking Impact Youth Outreach initiative.

"He counts the number of the stars, He gives names to all of them." -- Psalm 147:4. Often times it's hard to comprehend as finite beings, having a limited existence the infinite wisdom of God. The same God who knows the stars, knows and sees us. The Creator has a name and a purpose for all 300 sextillion stars -- Just as He has for each of us gathered here this evening. God knows our name. But here's the deal...we spend most of our lives running from that name. Like Jacob, God does not name him for what he would accomplish. He names him for something deeper. He names him for the internal character and values that are to be core to his being. God knows your name! In the midst of the noise and chaos of this world, God seeks to declare to our soul who we are. The same God who knows us sends us on a mission: Go!

Youth Violence continues to be clustered in the most impoverished and segregated neighborhoods in Nashville. There were 16,955 violent incidents in the past five years, Three of the 35 council districts in Nashville each had over 1,000 violent incidents. These are districts 2 (1,195), 19 (1,732) and 21 (1,262), which collectively make up North Nashville and account for 25% of the 16,955 incidents.

Reducing youth violence through expanded hope and opportunity will take all of the community working together to solve the challenges faced, but listening to those whose lives are impacted the most by youth violence is most important.

In this current political climate - of far too much division and hate, let us chose to embrace peace. In this time of great consequence, let us keep moving forward and working together to identify the concerns of Nashville's greatest treasure - our youth. We have a moral responsibility to invest and create policies in the communities, our youth live, learn and play.

In Nashville last year, the city saw 107 criminal homicides, the highest number since 1997.

We owe it to families like Debriannah Begley 16, caught in a hail of gunfire that broke out between two groups of young men outside her home in James Cayce public housing development.

In 2016, 83 Nashvillians were slain.



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In recent years, far too many families have been affected by senseless acts of violence, and far too many of those victims are our youth.

In 2017 alone the North Precinct investigated 25 homicides, the East Precinct 22 homicides and the South Precinct 21 homicides.

Of those murdered, 88 were men. All but 40 were African-American. Nearly 90 percent died as a result of gunfire. Of those killed in 2017, 15 were age 17 or younger. Nashville police arrested 12 people age 17 and under in connection to their deaths. The youngest arrested is a 12-year-old girl.

Quite frankly youth violence in the "It City" has become a public health epidemic.

As we address the challenges facing Nashville inner-city at-risk youth, as we meet the great struggles of this generation all of us must come together and never stop working - with optimism, with vigor, with commitment, and without delay - to build a renewed hope and forge a more perfect city where every child no matter where they live has the opportunity to succeed is and remains our common goal. It is my hope that through this work God will not change your moment, but rather change your life and the lives of the people connected to you.

Thank you.