

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 39: Lorraine Mackey

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

If a tree falls in the forest—and no one is around to hear it—does it make a sound?

If a male black teenager dies in the inner city in Baltimore, does it even matter?

Have you ever heard the name Aaron Mackey?

I would say that Aaron started having problems when he was as early as 8 years old. And this is what I feel all parents should start taking notice of, because at 8 years old he was crying out.

That's Aaron's mother, Lorraine Mackey. She knows better than most how early in a child's life events can conspire to cause damage and pain. An absent father, the impersonal and confusing social service bureaucracy, and sexual abuse at the hands of a trusted church leader all led to behavioral issues, which resulted in permanent suspension from the city school system. As the years went on, Aaron grew into an angry and lost young man.

He had no more hope in anything or anybody. He had absolutely respect for no authority figure. And I went to the courts trying to get help, to get him counseling, and to get him the help he...and these gangs, the bloods, the crips, they started rising up all over this city. And they embraced my son. They went to him and made him feel like, you're our brother, and you are a part of us, and this ignited the problem in him, because he felt a sense of belonging with these people. And in my heart, I knew that he was headed down a path of no return, and every time I would warn him, "I don't trust these people that you hanging with", he would look at me and say, "Ma, I don't care what you saying, these people are my family." And those are the people that ended up killing him. His very own gang members turned on him and killed my son. My son called me the day before he was killed. And he said, Mommy I am just checking on you, are you alright? Like he knew something was wrong. And the next day the police contacted me and told me my son was in Shock Trauma down at University Hospital and there had been a shooting. And when I got down to University Hospital I stood over my son for thirty minutes, kissing him, touching him, and talking to him—because according to the monitors he was alive. Finally the head surgeon came in and told me he had already pronounced my son dead two hours prior.

The pain caused by Aaron's death was felt keenly by Loraine's youngest son, Caleb, who lost his older brother and closest male relative.

Caleb went through a tremendous amount of trauma. I've had to take him to two therapists to begin to get him back on track. He literally fell into a life of fear for the first year. He wouldn't sleep in his room. The only thing he was interested in doing was sitting on the piano. Every time the least bit of sound happen, he jump up, just in fear. Mommy can you please move me away from here, Mommy can we please go somewhere else. And for the first eight months he was sleeping side by side with me in my bed. And he kept waking up, touching my face. Mommy, Mommy Mommy. And I say, what's the matter. He wants to know if I am alive. And this is why I made the decision to try and relocate him to another environment. This is why I am moving out of state.

How can we have any hope for our communities if people like Lorraine have to keep leaving out of fear for their children's health and sanity?

Next week, Lorraine shares her thoughts on why things have gotten so bad-and what we can do about it.

Music: Explosions in the Sky, *Remember Me as a Time of Day*

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