



## Toward A More Perfect Union: Managing Crime in East Baton Rouge Parish

“We are all familiar with the current statistics on the plight of the African American youth and his family. But perhaps we are not all familiar with how to teach life skills that empower the young African American male to become emotionally well and self-sufficient”.

“The best weapon for fighting disproportionate youth violence is teaching pro-social wealth creating behaviors.”

“It takes a village to raise a child and future leader. However, if the damn village support institutions are not correct the children will be crazy!”

Those institutions include religion, family, education, government, private enterprise and the media and the martial arts school. When these institutions unite, they provide reinforcement for pro-social behaviors and become truly authoritative communities where rules are applied consistently.

John G. Daniel  
President, Founder  
Unity Day Youth and Family Zone



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Emotional from his brother-in-law's recent slaying, Baton Rouge Police Chief Jeff LeDuff told a room of about 120 people at a town hall meeting on crime Thursday that he's tired of picking up young black men off the streets.

He said he had to do just that Sept. 4, when his brother-in-law, Christopher Domingue, 45, was shot during an armed robbery on West Roosevelt Street. The two men arrested in Domingue's killing also have been accused in the slaying of a woman earlier this summer.

"How many people have to die?" LeDuff asked, wiping a tear from his eye. "We have to take a stand as one. We can't stop here."

Several community leaders and residents who attended Thursday's meeting at the East Baton Rouge Parish Recreation and Park Commission headquarters on Florida Boulevard agreed and shared their thoughts about what needs to be done to combat crime.

"We have to constantly do, act and say the things that project the positive in the lives of young people," East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Sid Gautreaux said.

He said his office takes a two-pronged approach at fighting crime: community involvement and aggressive enforcement.

"You have to have both," Gautreaux said. "We shake a lot of hands, but we put a lot of hands that are holding guns and knives in handcuffs."

East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar Moore said one of the biggest problems he sees is the erosion of the family.

"It's a significant issue," he said, adding that most of the people he sees in court are from broken homes where there is little parenting and almost no accountability.

Moore said one of the primary solutions to crime is education, but that children have to be in school to be educated. That's why the parish's efforts to combat truancy are so important, he said.

During the past school year, truancy has declined 10 percent in public schools because community members talked about the issue and did something about it, he said.

East Baton Rouge Parish Mayor-President Kip Holden said the same can be done to reduce crime.

"At the end of the night, this community will have a new face and a new call to action," he said.

Holden said most of the crime in the parish is being committed in five ZIP codes and he called for ministers and community and business leaders in those areas to organize and begin to "dissect these areas and go in and make a difference."

Mary Jones, 72, said she's lived in north Baton Rouge since 1965 and has seen crime in her neighborhood consistently increase.

“It’s daily,” she said. “It’s crime anytime, anywhere and it’s become quite a concern.”

Jones said law enforcement is doing a good job, but what’s going on in the community is “a new deal for all of us.”

Sheila Feigley, 78, who lives near Baton Rouge General Medical Center-Mid City, said she attended the forum hoping to hear what could be done to keep behind bars career criminals who prey on people like her.

She said her purse was snatched last year at her back door by a thief who twisted her arm and knocked her to the ground. She said cameras at her house helped police identify and apprehend the man, who is a repeat offender with a lengthy record.

“I only had about \$25 in my purse and some blank checks,” Feigley said.

She said the police officers, detectives and prosecutors who handled her case “did a marvelous job.”

At the end of Thursday’s two-hour meeting, residents and community leaders split into several groups to discuss what they can do to make changes in the community. Metro Councilwoman Ronnie Edwards, who spearheaded the idea for the town hall meeting, has said those ideas will be organized and shared with the public at a later date.

*Advocate staff writer Greg Garland contributed to this report.*