



Hope In Spite of Homicide

By Joe Yancey

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During the past year, I have spent my Wednesday evenings at the Demetrious Johnson Charitable Foundation with people gathering to support each other through the grief and the hurt of losing someone they love to homicide. Their stories, but more importantly their strength, have always stuck with me.

One man, Larry, has been a source of hope and an example of trying to be Alive and Well, even through the difficulty of losing someone he loved to homicide. His nephew was killed just down the street from where he lives with his wife and sons. Even with his experience in combat zones as a member of the military, he said that nothing could have prepared him for seeing his nephew's body that evening.

Like most people in that situation, Larry felt emotions ranging from immense grief to anger. He could have chosen a lot of ways to channel his feelings, but he knew that ultimately, he wanted to do what he could to make sure that no other family experienced the kind of pain he and his loved ones felt after the loss of his nephew.

Larry's story is similar to too many people's stories in St. Louis. The trauma our community endures from violence and homicide is immense. Losing people we love to homicide, or living in fear about the potential for violence, takes its toll not only on our mental and spiritual wellbeing, but wears on our bodies as well. It's hard for our

community to become well when violence is keeping us sick.

What amazed me the most about Larry was his strong sense of hope through despair. He believes that the first step is for our community to realize that we need to love one another. We don't always have to like each other, but we need to share a common belief in our desire for our community to be a vibrant place to live. We need to choose to believe that love is stronger than pain and to set our pride aside to make steps for positive change.

If you share Larry's vision for a St. Louis that is bound together through love and is on the path to becoming Alive and Well, I urge you to learn more about Alive and Well STL by visiting www.aliveandwellstl.me.

If you have lost a loved one to homicide and are interested in joining or learning more about the Wednesday night trauma support group, held at the Demetrious Johnson Charitable Foundation from 6 to 7 PM, call Mr. Khatib Waheed at (314) 721-0557. If you, or someone you know, has been affected by violence or homicide and needs to talk to a mental health professional, please call Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri at (314) 773-1399. In a crisis? Get support now by calling Behavioral Health Response at (314) 469-6644 or toll free: 800-811-4760. For youth 19 and younger who reside in the St. Louis County area, call (314) 628-2929 or toll free: 877-928-2929, or text: 4HLP to 31658.

