

My name is Jacqueline Van Gordon
Sullivan County Survivor
Community Leader and Fighter

1/15/24

Today I Humbly speak on behalf of the Low - income Community and the Local well rooted, year round residents, who are the beating Heart of this community, who also support our summer visitors, tourists, and outside investors , with our population of 79,658 year round residents and a growth rate of 0.14 % in the past year according to the United States most recent Census .

With that being said,

I would like to start off with my emphasis on Mental Health and why it is such a vital necessity especially within our community . According to the World Health Organization of June 8th 2022, people with Mental Health Disorders have between a 10 to 20 year reduction in life expectancy, while individuals that are diagnosed with depression have a 1.8 times higher risk of premature death. According to Harvard, School of public Health Dec 4th 2020, 4 years ago Women that have PTSD with Depression may significantly increase the risk of early death. According to Harvard's Medical School July 21st, 2023, Half the world's population will now experience a mental Health disorder in one's lifetime, meaning that 1 out of every 2 people will experience this. These findings provide further proof that mental health is not only fundamental to our physical well being, but "key" to our very survival.

I can correlate my Experiences of trying to climb the pyramid here in Sullivan County versus the facts on the SocioEconomics (The interaction between Social and the Economic habits between a group of people) in Sullivan County New York. Through my Life Experiences Surviving My County and Through Education thanks to SUNY Sullivan and Human Services.

The scales of challenges that I have personally faced and are facing now really weigh down on Poverty, Housing, Social Mobility which then can have a "Domino Effect" onto the next challenges of SocioEconomics within itself, such as possible Discrimination's like ,

Biased community Leaders, that to can have a “Domino Effect” leading into and or Unemployment, Access to Education, and Health Disparities within our community.

For one example of many: The very simple fact that I stand before you speaking of the validity of these realities and biased endeavors, could be possible future reasons towards failure to the next person trying to build themselves up from the bottom or just in general in order to be a productive member in society, or to fighting for a better future for him or herself in our community. Isn't the Unethical and Immoral a risk factor to those who are pro life and pro mental health? I bear witness and testify to highly respected members of this community trying to use insecurities of one's past and one's worth as some form of psychological conditioning because their education allows them to, as ammunition against whomever these members wish too and then playing the Mental health card in a form of manipulation to try to belittle clients which could induce stigma, instability, competency, and or result in developing mental health issues which is a contradiction to Human Services, Human Rights and against the Law.

Through Educating myself, as I continue, I learned that I have rights to be heard, to exist in this community and in the world. I learned through my experiences that one person can make a difference even if they come from the pits of Hell.

With that being said, for the Average low income individual to even have an ounce of Hope of Surviving this community, year round assuming they didn't have an addiction problem, Mental Health, Employment or Housing problem to begin with, seems not only to be a pipe dream within itself but shown almost to be impossible through the course of one's journey here.

When it comes to housing an individual or a family in Emergency Housing, Almost every hotel including the Monticello Inn is practically A “Death Trap.” Housing Known Active Drug Dealers in the system, let alone the Business owners of our hotels doing shady business collaboration with the Active Drug Dealers and Active Offenders in this community.

Then you see the rise in our Suicide rates and Opioid Epidemic rates and that some of those who are dead or addicted just became another product of their

Social Environment of the “opposing community” that consist’s of Active Dealers and Active Users.

So who’s community really is it? Aside from the politics and some unethical members of this community Because the War on Drugs never ended..

We just gave up and said there’s nothing that can be done and with that concept of thought , nothing has been done. We’ve allowed Active Drug Dealers to take up our community, Bank off of the lives of our Friends, Family, Co-Workers and our Children, year after Year , Decade after Decade we bury the people we love in the Mountains of opportunity while “Death Dealers” become a stronger and a larger Community of Murders using Drug Dealing/Poison Dealing as some kind of culture to be exercised as a Freedom to kill ..

Here’s an example:

While I was volunteeringly working with the Drug Task Force and Substance Abuse Task Force when it came to cares and vital concerns for my building and the Safety of not only my daughter and I, but the Community in general. The first set of staff lied and said Chestnut Street Apartments was a success in their fist review and was anything but that as people were dying in our building and dropping like flies, dealers were dealing while living at Chestnut Street Apartments and was a zoo while being ran like one too, and I emphasize “was” Also living within a 0.7 mile radius of our School Zone inspired me even more so than that of the backlash from those who claim to care about our community and work in it. Being told I should mind my own business and being targeted by community members who worked in my building , that covered for the drug dealers in my building at the time , one in which who still holds a Masters degree in Human Services and has her title still in which I will not name only out of Mercy and I had to put a Report in with the New York State Justice Center for anything to be done in which it was, thankfully to where we have now No Drug Dealers in our building and a whole New staff in our building that care about the residents and safety of the building let alone RSS clients.

(Rehabilitated Supportive Services)

Then on the phone with a member of Social Services that wasn’t an LCSW but, yet was able to Unprofessionally and unethically, Argumentatively threaten to have my services cut off and said all she had to do was type in a Non-compliance, though I was doing more then just complying for my services

community, stating she was the New Financial Supervisor of the WorkForce at the time and started to tell me that I should mind my own business, and then asking if I was going to cry and hang up, as she tried arguing with me in order to receive the response she was really looking for out of me to use as some kind of ammunition, and unfortunately for her I didn't give her the pleasure, Which that conversation was recorded by the way for quality assurance. I had to contact the Commissioner of Social Services in assisting me because without me reaching out to him, for these injustices and discriminations though it wasn't technically accounted for as being Discriminations which says something right there, still the less, I would have been cut off from services with my child in my care regardless of my hard work in Surviving this Community and standing for it at the sametime!.

Then on to believing in more Community members and being lied to once again by members of this community.

I not only will prove my point of Hopelessness within our community, but this could possibly be added to the reasons of WHY there's this Hopelessness within our community.

From being set up with an unknown fake interview from the Department of Sullivan County WorkForce at the time last year, in believing I was going to be the next Peer Advocacy Support for Catholic Charities. Only to find out at last years Job Fair held at the Kartrite, that the interview I had over the phone in the Department of Sullivan County WorkForce was a fake interview and the man I did the Interview with over the phone wasn't even an actual employee of Catholic Charities that I had given my personal information to a complete stranger and was told I got the Job and would receive a call back with my Schedule to come to work .. Time had gone by and No calls. While at the Job Fair, I saw Catholic Charities and approached their table and started to ask the Women questions about my application and how come it's taking so long to get the call back for my schedule?

My WorkForce Worker at the time, who I will not mention, pulled me aside to inform me right at that moment at the job fair after talking to the table set up with two women who represented Catholic Charities.

To inform me that Catholic Charities had told the WorkForce that I didn't have enough cleantime and I ask how many years of cleantime is enough?

And what happened to Catholic Charities ? Where's the women's Unit?

When in fact that is a lie and defamation of my Character and Hard work to clear my name and build a future for me and my family. Let it be known for the record

Since 2013, When my daughter was born I started my journey with the Nuns in New Hope Manor and it took a few mistakes and some time, along with a whole lot of pain into learning from my mistakes and emotional disposition that had come from them. In the end I did it on my own, but not alone. I have survived a Horrific past.

From 2018 and ever since then I have upheld my promise to myself and to the people I Love including my kids, to be the best version of myself regardless of who says what or whatever comes my way.

My Higher power has me standing exactly where I'm supposed to be today.

I can honestly say without the Support of the Sullivan County Probation Department, who can verify the work I've done and what I continue to do as I support my community and Work with the Center for Justice.

I would have never made it this far, but that's just me and so far I haven't found any other survivors and I feel like I'm the only one who wants to make a difference here when I know that can't be true!

Regardless, if there's some opposition in my community that wants to challenge the very cause they not only preach and stand by, but. Alongside the mental/physical well being of those who trust in them and there is a correlation to be made why we don't have enough people in general trusting into the system. My Question is what kind of structure could we put in place that demands ethical conduct and accountability ? in other news I have reached to others like Senator Chuck Schumer about information in regards to the Opioid and Suicide crisis we truly face here just before he did his visit to label Sullivan County New York a (HIDTA) High Intense Drug Trafficking Area Jul 6th 2023. which also poses another Question. If we're now labeled High, Intense, Drug Trafficking Area, I respectfully ask what Mr.Conaty is going to do, but my other points of concern and questions I will close with and I ask to not only bring Awareness but inspire Action.

How does any person stand a chance in Sullivan County New York if they weren't well off to start? Given the perspective on "well off"

Where is the Hope? When you can't even trust some of the people who claim to support this county and it only takes few? Let alone how lenient we are with Active Drugs Dealers and Active Users which are one in the same today in this

community, We need harsher punishments for Death Dealers who are nothing but parasites sucking the life out of our community And where's the women's Unit of Catholic Charities? The lack of Mental Health seems to be the spark that ignites everything along with those who don't care.. Aside from Factoring those thoughts and justified questions..

What are we really doing as a community for our community if not Inducing More problems of Mental Health Disorders, Addiction, Hopelessness, Producing a sense of Powerlessness and most of all Inducing Suicide?

What are we really doing if we know what goes on and yet it seems we turn the other cheek? Just to get funded for it..

I don't need to get paid to do this because I'm mandated by my Heart,
And will stand here every chance I get even if I end up homeless
Because Soul's and Lives depend on those in power to care and that's what I
fight for , the worth of a human being.

Thank You for letting me speak.

This is Jacqueline Van Gorodn and I know what we're worth.

