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Paula Dow
Essex County Prosecutor
State of New Jersey

MS. DOW: I'm really proud to be here today and to represent maybe a different side of Newark, and we're talking about Essex County.

When you talk about Newark, we really are studying a city of contrast. In one sense, let's all admit it, we are the renaissance city. We just opened a phenomenal Prudential Center. We're blocks away from the NJ PAC, right down the street from a new court system and just up the block from one of the most phenomenal science high buildings ever brought -- built. It is a system of the best bringing up, yet I in many respects find myself representing the underbelly of the city, and that's what we faced here in the Essex County Prosecutor's Office when we looked at the violence which continues to bring down this county and too often continues to bring down the reputation of this city.

What is it always tied to? We could go on for hours, but everyone has to admit that it's increasingly tied to gangs. It's increasingly tied to guns, and almost always it's increasingly tied to a minority right here in this city.

So let's just look at what happened in and around Newark and Essex County over the last few weeks, this week, and the last few months to bring it all home.

Two bodies were dumped in a West Orange parking lot. Gang related, shot in the back of the head, ages 20 and ages 19, one Latino, one African American just this past Monday.

One body found shot in the head, Home Liquors here in our own Newark, African American. And just over the border less than two weeks ago a 13-year-old boy was riddled and shot down when he was out on the street on a school night after midnight, shot by someone who's not yet been found.

And let's really remember what shook the very -- the very roots of this city not too long ago. How can any of us in this room ever forget what happened to Terence and to Sean and Ariel and Natasha. How can we ever forget what those four students represented about the greatness of the youth of Newark and yet what happened to them so much showed what's wrong with Newark today. Struck down by people that have been identified, three of them youths, all violently shot in the back of their head, left for dead on a schoolyard.

It's the underside of Newark that so grips us and, in fact, brings us all together in this room today, and until we deal with these two contrasting sides of Newark and indeed of

every urban community here, we will always need a commission like this to say what is wrong and why can't we improve it.

Thank you very much.