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Estelle Richman is on board to help save lives ... again

Naiser Warren-Robinson TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

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As a lifelong public servant, Estelle Richman has spent most of her time attempting to help and uplift the people that around her.

Richman will now be spending her time attempting to solve Philadelphia's gun violence crisis as the new executive director of the Coalition to Save Lives.

Raised in a segregated 1950s Virginia, Richman said she was taught the importance of equal representation at an early age.

“Whenever the city had to do anything, whether it was housing or health care or schools, there was never a Black person at the table,” Richman said. “My parents always fought to be at the table.”



Estelle Richman is the new executive director of the Coalition to Save Lives.
—TRIBUNE PHOTO/ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

“My mother said that if you ever get into a position where you can make those kinds of choices, always have someone whose life is going to be impacted by that policy at the table.”

Richman’s father was a doctor and her mother taught at a Black college, so the values of public service were instilled in her at a young age as well.

All of these values Richman adopted has and continues to influence the approach she takes in her work to this day.

“No matter what I’ve done, I’ve tried to have people whose lives are impacted by my decisions or by the policy decisions always sit and have some say at that policy table,” she said.

Prior to being named executive director, Richman had been retired for the past 10 years, traveling and exploring the world with her family every chance she got.

However, when she was contacted by the coalition to make a difference in Philadelphia’s gun violence epidemic, Richman said she saw the opportunity as an “obligation to step up.”

“I love this city,” Richman said. “I’ve lived here for 40 years now and I think it could be better and I want to help it get there.”

Now that Richman is the executive director of the Coalition to Save Lives, she will be working closely with gun violence prevention stakeholders from all across the city.

Mayor Jim Kenney, who has worked with Richman in the past during his time as a city Council member, said having Richman at the table makes him “even more confident” in the city’s ability to coordinate a strategy that will save lives from gun violence.

“She is a true partner who listens, amplifies the voices of those most directly impacted by policies and decisions, and is dogged in her pursuit of finding common ground, taking action and creating change,” he said.

Pedro Ramos, president and CEO of the Philadelphia foundation, said the coalition called on Richman to lead because of her “experience, knowledge and understanding of the city, public health and social services.”

“I’ve known Estelle Richman for many years and cannot think of a more dedicated and capable individual to lead the coalition forward,” Ramos said.

Richman said her immediate focus with the coalition will be fostering collaboration and communication amongst all the city’s gun violence prevention stakeholders, as well as engaging directly with people in communities that have been impacted by gun violence.

“My goal here is to listen more to those people that in the community whose lives are being impacted, particularly all of the young men who are being shot or doing the shooting,” she said. “Even if they are doing the shooting, I think they want something else out of life and part of it is trying to listen to help them figure it out.”