

Ernest Flagler brief autobiography:

Born in Rochester NY on January 19, 1978, I was one of six children. I attended and graduated from Rochester City schools: Schools number 33, 12, Monroe, and graduated from East High School in 1997. While in sixth grade at Monroe, I was placed in special education due to my behavior. I struggled in school, but knew I did not belong in special ed. I talked to God and God helped me to get out of special education. I worked hard my seventh grade year and by the eighth grade I was in mainstream classes. One of the reasons I struggled was because my parents separated. My parents divorced because of my father's drug use. I felt that the drugs destroyed my family and so I went on a rampage, running in gangs, becoming what many in the neighborhood would have called a "hell raiser".



I gave my life to the Lord at the age of fifteen, and have known that I had a calling on my life ever since. Even though I knew I had a calling on my life, I still struggled to walk away from the life of gangs and violence. Spiritually, I was caught up in so much wrong I was unable to escape my struggles. It was not until I fathered a child at the age sixteen and was pistol whipped the day before she was born, that I was able to see that there was more to life.

It was then I started to get back on track. I helped to provide for my daughter by working two jobs. I was accepted in the Firefighter Trainee program in 11th grade at East High. With the Lord's help, I graduated from high school with honors and became one of the first African Americans to complete the fire fighter trainee program and be sworn into the Rochester fire department.

Today I have 19 years with the Rochester Fire Department and I oversee the Community Risk Reduction Department. I am also the Assistant Minority Leader of the Monroe County Legislature. As a Monroe County Legislator, I represent the 29th District, which includes neighborhoods in the City of Rochester's Northeast and Northwest. I was elected to the County Legislature in fall of 2014 and was sworn in on January 1, 2015. I currently serve as the Ranking Minority Member of the Recreation and Education Committee and I also sit on the Environmental and Public Works Committee.

In 2005, I was a graduate of the African American Development Program. I have been honored by community organizations in the past for my community involvement and I continue to stay involved in Group 1462, Rochester Rams Pop Warner Football and am the Founder of Rochester Parents United.

I am an Ordained Elder at the Word of The Cross Church. I am an alumnus of Monroe Community College and received an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts.

My wife, Keia, and I have eight children: Bobbi, Alyia, Fphasieth, Odessia, Richard, Ernest Jr, Ja'Mese, and Jairus Mitchell, and I am the grandfather of two: Derrick Macon, Jr. and Leyah Marie Hill. As a parent, I understand that investing in our youth must be top priority, making sure that they have good jobs, education and the skill set they will need to tackle the world and make this community a better place.

Editor's Note: Material drawn from an interview with Ernest for the *Creating Hope* video.