

## **DeForest Blake Soaries, Jr., AfroAmerica Network Black Man of Year 2010.**

In 2005, he launched a pilot program at his church, the First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens, aimed at helping individuals, families to get out debt and use resources for achieving their financial independence.



He, Reverend DeForest Blake "Buster" Soaries, Jr., has been trying to make a difference in people's lives over his entire adult life covering close to four decades. He was born in Brooklyn, New York on August 20, 1951, but has been living in Montclair, New Jersey, two major rivers across Brooklyn.

A republican, he served as New Jersey Secretary of State. Subsequently, he unsuccessfully run for US Representative.

Reverend Dr. Soaries was chosen as the keynote speaker at the 2000 Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration in Atlanta and has worked for the Urban League and Operation PUSH. He holds a Master's degree of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and a Doctorate of Ministry from United Theological Seminary.

Reverend Dr. DeForest Blake Soaries, Jr. has unequivocally expressed his support for faith-based initiatives, as the best way to promote community development and empowerment and achieving violence prevention, especially in underprivileged or inner-city neighborhoods. He founded several non-profit organizations for this purpose, including the Renaissance Community Development Credit Union, the Harvest of Hope Family Services Network, and the Renaissance Education & Technology Academy.

He is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey since November 1990. It is with that Church that he launched the DFREE initiative. The DFREE was a welcome as the community his church serves has been hit hard with the economic recession. The DFREE engages families, mostly African-American to be financial responsible, payoff their debt, learn how to manage money, and create wealth. The gospel preached goes with these values, and advocate the system known as "Faith in Action". The initiative was featured in a CNN documentary. The documentary highlights ways African-American faith community uses to address the challenges of the national economic crisis and how one man, Reverend DeForest Blake "Buster" Soaries, Jr., has played a unique role in helping the community that looks up to him as a father figure.

©AfroAmerica Network, 2010.