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St. Croix Steel Pan Instructor Sentenced to 15 Years for Exploiting 16-Year-Old and Sharing Abuse Video

Dante James was convicted of producing child pornography and second-degree rape after recording the abuse of a minor and distributing the video on Snapchat and social media

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Mugshot of Dante James. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Dante James, a 28-year-old resident of St. Croix, was sentenced in federal court to 15 years in prison on Wednesday, on convictions of producing child pornography and second-degree rape. The sentencing was handed down by District Judge Wilma Lewis, who also ordered that James serve 84 months for the rape charge concurrently with his 180-month sentence for child pornography.

Following his prison term, James will be under supervised release for 10 years, must pay a \$100 special assessment, and has been fined \$8,000. The jury found James guilty on July 12, 2024.

U.S. Attorney Delia L. Smith emphasized the impact of sexual abuse on the community, stating, "Sexual abuse impacts our entire community and exposes its victims to a lifetime of trauma. It is particularly heinous when sexual predators exploit our young children. We remain committed to fully seeking justice for victims of child exploitation and sexual abuse by prosecuting sex offenders of the law in hopes of creating a safe community for our children."

The case highlighted an abuse of trust, as noted by Homeland Security Investigations Assistant Special Agent in Charge Eugene Thomas. He said, "The defendant's sexual abuse was also an abuse of trust. As the victim's former steel pan instructor, James abused her trust to be a role model and a leader. HSI will continue to work with the V.I. Police Department to ensure that predators who prey on minors in our community are convicted of their crimes."

Evidence from the trial revealed that between January 1, 2021, and August 23, 2022, James had sexual intercourse with a 16-year-old minor. He also produced a video recording of the act using an electronic device involved in interstate and foreign commerce. The minor discovered the recording after James sent it to her through Snapchat, despite her request for him to delete it. The video was later posted on social media.

The case was a collaborative effort involving Homeland Security Investigations and the VIPD. Assistant United States Attorneys Rhonda Williams-Henry and Everard Potter prosecuted the case under the banner of Project Safe Childhood, a Department of Justice initiative launched in May 2006. This program aims to combat the growing issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse by coordinating federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute offenders while also focusing on victim rescue.

For more information on Project Safe Childhood, visit <http://www.justice.gov/psc>.