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Mother Pleads for Answers After Tre'Vante Etienne Is Fatally Shot on Vester Gade; Bryan Calls for Community Action

Tre'Vante Etienne's mother urged the community to stop protecting secrets and help find answers after the fatal Vester Gade shooting, while Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said the territory must confront youth violence beyond policing and create safe spaces.

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The mother of Tre'Vante Etienne is pleading for witnesses and community members with information to come forward after her son was fatally shot Friday in the area of Vester Gade on St. Thomas. Governor Albert Bryan Jr. called for a broader response to gun violence, while the Department of Health made behavioral health support available to residents affected by the teen's death.

Tre'Vante died after being shot multiple times Friday afternoon. According to the VIPD, ShotSpotter alerted 911 to multiple gunshots around 2:17 p.m. in the area of Vester Gade, and a concerned citizen later reported that a male victim had been injured. Police found Tre'Vante responsive with multiple gunshot wounds before he was transported by ambulance to the Roy Lester Schneider Hospital, where he later died despite lifesaving efforts. The VIPD has not identified a suspect or reported an arrest in the case.

In a statement posted on What's Going On, St. Thomas?, Tre'Vante's mother, Simone Lovin S'moiandTrey Gomez, described the pain of losing her son and urged anyone with information to speak up.

“I never imagined I would be writing these words.

My child was taken from me. His future, his dreams, his laugh, his life GONE because of the actions of cowards. This morning I woke up hoping this is a nightmare, and every night I am now forced to relive the reality that my son is NEVER coming home.

To the people who know what happened.. How can you sleep at night knowing this is on your conscious?!..People know who did this. People know the truth. Speaking up or staying silent is a CHOICE, and every day that passes without answers deepens the wound that has been ripped through our family.

My son and any other person who has been a victim deserves better. My son deserved to grow older. My son deserved the chance to live the life that was stolen from him.”

She described Tre'Vante as someone who would have acted if another family were seeking justice.

“And if this had happened to one of his friends, he would've been boots to the ground, knocking on doors, making calls, following every lead, doing everything possible to help that family find answers. That's the kind of heart he had. He showed up for people. He fought for people.

I am begging the community to show up for him.

If you know anything anything at all please come forward. Stop protecting secrets and these COWARDS! Stop protecting people who don't deserve protection. Help us get the truth. Help us get justice for this young life that was taken way too soon. So if you saw, heard, or know something come forward ,no piece of information is too small. My son mattered. He was loved beyond words. And we will NEVER stop fighting for him.”

The statement also repeated the call for information, asking anyone with knowledge of the shooting to contact the Criminal Investigation Bureau at 340-774-2211, extensions 5555 or 5556, or Crime Stoppers V.I. at 800-222-8477. Tips may be made anonymously.

Governor Bryan also issued a statement Saturday, saying the death of the young Savan resident had deeply affected him.

“Today, my heart is heavy. Like so many Virgin Islanders, I am deeply saddened and disturbed by the tragic loss of a 14-year-old child whose life was cut short by senseless gun violence in the Savan community,” Governor Bryan said.

“I extend my deepest condolences to his family, friends, classmates, teachers, and all those who loved him.”

The governor said the tragedy was personal because of his own connection to Savan.

“This tragedy strikes particularly close to home for me. I grew up in Savan. I walked those streets as a young boy. I knew a neighborhood where families looked out for one another, where children

played freely, and where hope was stronger than fear.”

“To witness the reality that our young people face today compared to the community I remember is heartbreaking. No parent should have to bury a child. No neighborhood should have to endure the pain of seeing its children become victims of violence. And no society can accept the loss of its young people as normal.”

Governor Bryan said law enforcement will continue its work, but he argued that the territory must also confront the wider causes of violence.

“While law enforcement will continue its efforts to bring those responsible to justice, we must also confront the larger issue before us. This is not simply a policing problem. It is a community problem. It is a family problem. It is a societal problem. It demands that all of us—government, parents, educators, faith leaders, and community members—work together to reclaim our neighborhoods and create opportunities, hope, and safe spaces for our youth.”

“We cannot allow another generation of children to grow up believing that violence is an inevitable part of life. We owe them better. We owe this young man better.”

The governor asked Virgin Islanders to keep the family in prayer and to recommit to building safer communities for children.

“Tonight, I ask all Virgin Islanders to keep this family in your prayers. Let us mourn this devastating loss, but let us also recommit ourselves to building communities where our children can grow, dream, and thrive without fear.”

“May God comfort this family during their unimaginable grief, and may He guide us as we work to end the cycle of violence that continues to rob us of our most precious resource—our children.”

The Department of Health also extended condolences to Tre’Vante’s family, friends, classmates, teachers and loved ones, as well as others affected by the fatal shooting.

“This is a profoundly difficult time for our community,” said Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. “Our hearts are with Tre’Vante’s family, friends, classmates, and all those who loved and cared for him. We encourage parents, caregivers, educators, and community members to check in with one another, especially our children and young people, and seek support if needed.”

The Behavioral Health Division is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to provide counseling referrals, emotional support and information about mental health services for individuals, families and community members affected by the loss.

Residents seeking assistance may contact the St. Thomas Behavioral Health Clinic at 340-774-6380, St. John Behavioral Health Services at 340-776-6400, or the St. Croix Behavioral Health Clinic at 340-773-1311.