

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Op-Ed: Presence Before Prevention

Opinion / **Published On February 24, 2015 02:52 PM /**

Staff **February 24, 2015**



Sirens blare in the morning as I sit in class. Students used to rush to the window to see the commotion. Now, it's such a normality; it has our attention just about as long as a TV commercial lasts.

On the ride home, I see ambulances racing past me. The usual reaction is, "What could it be now?" I counted bullets fired as I sat on my bed the other Friday. Cars drove through police checkpoints as if it was just another pulled-over vehicle.

As I scroll through my Facebook news feed, I see schoolmates post respects to someone they were used to laughing with. And the next week, it's like nothing ever happened.



numb to sights and sounds that used

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"How did this happen?!" It may be that the blind eye turned to emergency sirens may have been closed on children in adolescence.

We were raised in a breeding ground of criminal charges. We were lulled to sleep by the tempo of gunshots, and when we had the cold, instead of inhaling Vicks vapor, we filtered the smoke of black and mild.

To pass the time, we traded tag for a game of dice. Corners had better attendance than classrooms, and the uniform of black shirt, gold chain, and slippers was worn proudly.

Dinner tables fit for four had only seen one at any given time and family talks are myth. Frustrations are soothed with mindless music, and television sets remedied boredom; but the dose was a heaping teaspoon of reality TV.

When we were punished, we were conditioned never to ask why. We only faced consequences, what we all know as *licks* -- the physical way to teach a lesson. Day in and day out this was a routine and no one noticed this pattern to stop it.

Teens are shortchanged as the "middle child of society," while the attention is split between economy and job opportunity. When teens are faced with a problem, we are left to our own reasoning, much of which we have gained outside our homes and deal out what we have dealt with -- repercussion without discussion.

There is a sense of independence and pride because we were left to our own agendas early on. As a result, when adult counsel comes, much too late, I might add, it is refused.

While this may not fit the description of every interaction adults have with teens, my suggested solution for adults that find themselves here is *don't play the blame game*.

The time taken to point the finger is the same time it takes to point a gun, and as fast as a name is called the bullet claims a name. Take hold of the habits you can break before it becomes grafted into a personality trait. Be more mindful of your child's musical interest,

past times, and school performance.

We, as teens, advocate presence before prevention.

Submitted by:

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