

The Virgin Islands Consortium

The Reasons Why We Decided To Show The Gruesome Images Of Monday's Double Homicide

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Staff **March 29, 2016**



Update: 3:34 p.m. *The Consortium has taken down the images of two brothers [who fell victim to gunfire while playing dominoes](#) yesterday. The decision was made after speaking to the mother of the victims, who respectfully requested that they be removed.*

Earlier: On Monday evening, The Virgin Islands Consortium reported a [shooting incident](#) that occurred near the Red Brick Shanty in Christiansted. The scene was graphic: lifeless bodies of two men on the ground, wasted; their lives cut short. The perpetrator had apparently marked his prey and attacked while they played dominoes.

Blood gushing from their spiritless bodies; the scene was horrendous. Family and friends could be seen on the sidelines grieving while dozens of onlookers -- among them children who had attended an event at the same location -- gazed in amazement. Emergency medical technicians searched desperately for signs of life, but none was found.

The scene was not only horrendous, it was shocking and horrific.

The Consortium, after careful consideration, made a decision to publish the story along with some of the graphic pictures that the publication had captured. We expected hostile responses from residents frustrated by our decision, and we understand why: families are grieving and the incident was fresh. But the reason the decision to publish those images was made had nothing to do with garnering more traffic to our website, like many have suggested. In fact, the total opposite is true. The staff of this publication sympathizes with the family and friends of the deceased, but we felt that the best way we could help in quelling crime in our communities was to bring attention to the graphic nature of these crimes so our leaders could wake up to the brutal reality; and take decisive action.

Year in and year out, dozens die in the Virgin Islands through gun violence. The territory has been rated among the highest in gun deaths per capita, and placed fourth with the [highest murder rate in the Caribbean in 2013](#). In recent weeks, there have been back-to-back shooting incidents in St. Croix, leaving multiple persons wounded and [one dead](#), and the killing [continues as well in St. Thomas](#). Crime in the territory drastically increased last year, so much so that the acting governor at the time, Osbert Potter, [declared a state of emergency](#). Later that year, Governor Kenneth Mapp [signed an executive order](#) that assigned all peace officers -- along with some members of the National Guard -- to the V.I.P.D., in an effort to crush the criminal element. The initiative worked for a while, but the violence surged again when the action ended.

But because most people don't see the graphic nature of these crimes, every death has become another statistic, and the righteous anger that once accompanied the news of homicides in the territory has been replaced with mere acceptance that yet another soul was lost.

We *hate* these images as much as you do; however, the territory is losing sight of what has been a deep-seated problem in our community that dates back decades. Our society is [laced with poverty](#); poor education and meager opportunities. The Government of the Virgin Islands cannot wish these problems away; and another press release by another politician decrying the incident as heinous will not suffice.

Leaders here need to set aside politics, stop enacting useless gun laws that have yet to deter criminal activity, and think-tank their way to inventiveness that will start the process of solving the decades-old crime issue. We cannot hide the harsh reality of criminal activity.

The Consortium has been privy to information where victims, after being murdered, had their limbs chopped off. We've seen images of victims eyes bulging out of their heads; and have known cases where entire gun magazines were emptied on lives already taken.

A drive-by shooting occurred [at the height of day](#) and near one of St. Croix's major public schools last year. Gun battles have ignited near police stations as if the criminals had no fear of law enforcement. A brazen shooting almost [ended the life of an innocent man](#), and yet there seems to be no end in sight to the violence.

We hope the images of men lying lifeless on the ground while men, women and children look on, will stir a more robust debate and spur immediate action among elected officials. And we can't continue to deny reality; because if we do, another young man in his prime will be gunned down, and the response will be more of the same until it hits home.

Written by: The Consortium's Editorial Board.

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