

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Charlotte Amalie Student Injured After Being Punched In Jaw; Suspect In Police Custody

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Last updated: Saturday, 6:39 a.m. ST. THOMAS -- A video making the rounds on social media shows one student being punched in the jaw, even if it appears he had not provoked the assault. The Consortium was contacted by a disturbed parent on Friday, who led the publication to the Facebook page hosting the video.

The assault, seen [here](#), shows a Charlotte Amalie student being shadowed by another. The victim continued slowing walking away when suddenly the other student levied a hard punch right in the jaw of the victim. It was later made known that the victim's jaw was broken following the assault.

At time of writing, the video was viewed by over 49,000 people, had near 400 reactions, and was shared over 900 times.

Police Commissioner Delroy Richards confirmed to The Consortium this morning that the suspect was taken into custody. The commissioner said upon receiving the video, he immediately contacted the St. Thomas police chief and ordered him to seek out the perpetrator. The commissioner was also told by the child's mother that her son's jaw was broken in not one, but two places.

The Department of Education issued a release on Friday, stating that the off-campus altercation started on-campus at the Charlotte Amalie High School.

"On September 15, 2016 an altercation between students at the Charlotte Amalie High School resulted in the injury of one student at an off-campus location. A video of the incident has been circulating online and the Department of Education wishes to express its condemnation of all acts of violence, both on and off its school campuses. The department is committed to ensuring that its schools maintain a safe and orderly environment for students to learn," reads the statement, issued by D.O.E.'s communications director, Cynthia Graham.

Senator Jean Forde, who leads the Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development, decried the incident, describing it as a "brutal attack."

"Many things really bother me about the attack. First, there is the fact of the beating itself, in which a young man, who made no attempt to escalate the incident or to fight back, was victimized so brutally. Secondly, the incident took place on a heavily traveled highway in broad daylight, in front of over a dozen people, and it doesn't seem, based on the video, that anyone tried to defuse the situation or even to help the young man after he was injured," Mr. Forde said. "Third, I have learned that the video has been posted on a website where people earn bragging rights for the most hits, thus glorifying a culture of violence. Last, and perhaps most disturbing, are the online statements of many people who have urged physical retaliation. We simply cannot continue like this and remain a viable community."

The assault, which occurred near Mandela Circle and Yacht Haven Grande, is one of many brawls between the territory's students. The Consortium has seen multiple videos shared among students on social platforms. And a video making the rounds earlier this year, showed a parent fighting with a student at the Central High School, with students yelling in the background.

Mr. Forde said he has reached out to officials of D.O.E., and called for plans on how to strengthen rules that discourage such behavior at schools.

"Clearly, there is a need to collaborate on establishing and strengthening policies to make it clear that there is zero tolerance for this type of behavior among our students and young people," Mr. Forde said.

The first-term Democrat also called for soul-searching on how to curtail violence as a whole. "We cannot legislate civility or force people to help their fellow human beings and to forego violent retaliation. We can, however, engage in a community-wide conversation and begin to come to a consensus that enough is enough, and that we must commit to

settling our disputes without resorting to violence.

"This cycle of violence and retaliation is destroying our community and killing a generation of young men and women, and it time for it to stop. As Martin Luther King so wisely said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or we shall perish together as fools," he said.

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