

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At Murder Victims Remembrance Event In St. Thomas, Walker Says D.O.J. Tackling Crime Problem In Many Ways

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ST. THOMAS -- Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said his office is assiduously dealing with the problem of crime and violence that is plaguing our society, the local Department of Justice announced via press release this afternoon.

Mr. Walker made these remarks as he addressed a gathering Sunday afternoon who congregated at Emancipation Garden to observe this year's National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims.

He said that while there has to be a less violent and aggressive Virgin Islands, it cannot happen overnight and the Attorney General's Office is doing its part to tackle the problem in so many ways.

"First, less than a year ago," he said, "we have increased the staff of the Victim Unit. For the first time, we have two full-time victim advocates, Elma Brathwaite and Donnalie Edwards-Cabey. These are persons that the victims can talk to, they meet with crime victims or their families on a regular basis, keep crime victims and their families informed of their cases and attend court with them at either trial or sentencing of the defendant."

The recent hiring of several prosecutors in both the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix districts is another strategy the Attorney General's office has employed to vigorously fight crime. "

"... We understand that when we have charged someone with murder, the family expects that we put adequate resources into preparing and trying these cases," Mr. Walker said.

He also used the opportunity to highlight the importance of the occasion.

"We are remembering persons who have passed away," he said. "No one wants to live, die and be forgotten. We should have more events like this to remember victims of murder, to remember those who have died."

Speaking to the spiraling crime rate in the Territory, the AG opined that the murders will end "when we realize that we have violent impulses as human beings and work to suppress them." St. Thomas/St. John Acting Police Chief Jason Marsh, who also delivered brief remarks, appealed to the public to help the police in its crime-fighting efforts.

"We as a community must not be desensitized to this cycle of violence," Mr. Marsh said. "We must bring this community back to a place where we feel safe when walking the streets. It takes us to have enough and to do something about it. I challenge you to help us bring these criminals to justice."

Also on hand to address the attendees was Vivian St. Juste, Executive Director of the Family Resource Center, who informed the affected families of the services her organization offers.

During the ceremony, relatives of two murder victims reflected on the lives of their loved ones. One of the highlights of the event was the signing of the scroll when family members of murder victims were given the opportunity to announce and write the names of their loved ones on either of two memory scrolls mounted on site.

The National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims was jointly organized by the Victim Services Unit of the Department of Justice and the Family Resource Center.