

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police Arrest Two In Connection With Homicide Of 73-Year-Old Church Elder

Crime / **Published On November 01, 2016 12:00 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **November 01, 2016**



Avondale George, 18



Enock Cole, 18

ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Police Department has arrested two 18-year-olds in connection with the homicide death of Augustus Bannis, a then-73-year-old church elder [who was beaten and carjacked and left for dead while fetching almonds for his wife](#) at the David Hamilton Jackson park in Grove Place.

The men, [Avondale George Jr.](#) and [Enock Justin Cole](#), who were minors [when they allegedly perpetrated the crime on August 17, 2015 along with two adults](#), were rearrested and charged with first-degree murder, first-degree assault and unauthorized use of a vehicle, according to V.I.P.D. Public Information Officer Glen Dratte.

With bail set at \$1 million, the men were unable to satisfy the sum and were remanded to the Golden Grove Detention Center pending their advise-of-rights hearing.

The Consortium had broken the news of the assault before it was reported by the V.I.P.D., after being told of the incident by relatives and church family of Mr. Bannis, who were grieving at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, distraught that Mr. Bannis had been assaulted



Augustus Bannis and his wife. (Credit: Mr.

Bannis's Family)

Unconscious, and suffering with severe head and facial injuries, his condition took a turn for the worse and Mr. Bannis, a then-elder at the Calvary Baptist Church, was airlifted to the Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami to receive additional care.

Mr. Bannis, universally loved by those who knew him, [died before noon on August 23](#) in the Miami hospital, surrounded by grieving family. He was in a coma during his entire stay at the medical facility and was never able to recover.

Mr. Bannis's pastor, Anthony Benjamin, was en route to Florida when he died after being told by family members that the elder's condition had deteriorated.

Mr. Bannis's family members have seen their lives drastically altered following the sad events of August 17. Along with church members, they've held services at the location where Mr. Bannis was carjacked, praying for whomever committed the crime, and for justice.

"We would really love for those persons who perpetrated this act to know God is merciful and that God is just. And that we, as children of God, are merciful and just. We are not looking for vengeance in this situation. We are not looking for the worst for anyone out of this situation. We are looking for the very best in the midst of this situation.

"We would like them to acknowledge that they did something wrong and they should throw themselves at the mercy of the law. I would encourage them to give up themselves and if they are afraid to do that, come see me. Come see the pastor. Come sit down and talk with me. Again, we're not looking for vengeance, we're looking for justice," Mr. Benjamin [said on Sunday](#), August 23.

In mid-September, Mr. Benjamin held a brief press conference at the same park where Mr. Bannis had been beaten unconscious. The event had marked one month since the near-fatal incident, yet no updates had been given from law enforcement in relation to the apprehension of suspects. Mr. Benjamin was also calling on the community to share

what they know, if any, with him or law enforcement, so justice could be served.

In November, 2015, the V.I.P.D. announced that it had arrested four men suspected of the homicide -- two minors at the time and two adults. The adults were identified as Jahmal Rivera, 29, of Estate Grove Place and Dumaray Isles, 23, of Estate Upper Love. They were both charged with first-degree murder, first-degree robbery and unauthorized use of a vehicle.

News of the arrests will come as relief to family members as well as Mr. Bannis's church family, whose calls for justice had ricocheted throughout this community; touched by the devastating incident and untimely loss of a man who was expressing love to his wife by collecting almonds for her.

Mughshots provided by the V.I.P.D.

© Viconsortium 2026