

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Victims Of Gun Violence Remembered During Frederiksted March

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ST. CROIX -- A group of St. Croix residents took to the streets of Frederiksted on Saturday afternoon, beginning at the Fish Market and making their way all the way to the Budhoe Park, in remembrance of loved ones who lost their lives through gun violence.

Among participants of the march were people who lost brothers and sons. They were joined by the St. Croix Educational Complex marching band, a group of drummers and three bikers, while being escorted by police.

Saturday's march, dubbed "Our Loved Ones Are Alive In Our Hearts", was the fourth of its kind organized by Ilesha Hodge, above, who started the march in honor of her own

son, who was shot to death 18 years ago.

"Today is a day of recognizing them and the memory of them. We try to come together, and all that is aching and grieving to find out and to know that we are not alone. We all are in this together, and for those on the outside to see the pain and the grief that it brings to loved ones when violence takes place," Ms. Hodge said.

Some participants struggled to keep their composure as they made their way to Budhoe Park. Some declined to speak with The Consortium, noting the pain that had resurfaced as they marched. "Sometimes I dial his phone and then I catch myself. The pain is unbearable," said one participant.

Once at the bandstand at Budhoe Park, Ms. Hodge blew a conch shell horn multiple times as she paid respect to the deceased. There was also a sermon from Reverend Gregory Gibson, his second appearance at the event.

Mr. Gibson spoke on the importance of forgiveness, making reference to the Bible book of Genesis, chapter 4, which details the story of Cain killing his brother Abel, and the manner in which God dealt with Cain -- which Mr. Gibson said should serve as a reminder of the importance of forgiveness, even when egregious wrongs are committed.

Mr. Gibson said Cain, after killing his brother, told God that the punishment levied against him was unbearable, and God in turn warned that anyone who killed Cain would receive a reward seven times worse than Cain's.

Gun violence has been one of the major problems affecting the territory, with last year being [one of the worst years on record](#). And while gun violence on St. Croix has decreased notably in 2017, the trend that was realized in 2016 continues into 2017 in St. Thomas.