

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Our Statement On The Publishing And Retracting Of Rape/Assault Story

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On Sunday, we published a [press release](#) issued by the Virgin Islands Police Department, that included scant details about a man, Warren Brooks, who had allegedly raped a female acquaintance.

"According to Mr. Dratte, at approximately 10:49 a.m. on Friday, an adult female reported to police that a male acquaintance, Warren Brooks, age 48, demanded that she have sex with him and when she refused to, he forcibly removed her pants and underwear, held her down and, using force, attempted to have sexual intercourse with her," reads a paragraph in press release, paraphrased for clarity.

The press release also revealed that Mr. Brooks was charged with first-degree rape, and was not afforded bail.

Immediately after being published, [many of the comments on our Facebook platform](#) were immediately suggesting that the victim was lying, with some stating that Mr. Brooks is a well-known individual with a pleasant demeanor.

"This is completely out of character for him. And I hope the Justice System does its due diligence and do a thorough investigation. I have known men that have been convicted in the Court of public opinion and when the story unfolds, it was a woman filing false charges because she did not get what she wanted or was trying to cover up her affair because she was caught and the man gets thrown under the bus because the man is convicted even before he goes to court," reads one comment, for example.

"Prayerfully the justice system works and the truth is the result. This would be the last thing I would ever associate Warren with! Omg I'm stunned," reads another.

And yet another comment reads, "Wow... can't pass judgement yet. Need to know all the facts."

After reading many comments suggesting that the victim was somehow lying, we decided to seek out all the details of the case through the probable cause fact sheet. One of our journalists went to the Superior Court, requested the document, which was public, paid the fee and left with it. At the time, we thought we'd gotten an opportunity to make available information to the public that would make clear that an assault did take place.

So we published the story with the details found in the probable cause fact sheet. Almost immediately, we realized that it had the opposite effect than what we were expecting, and decided to pull the story shortly after it was published.

We understand and have studied the ethics relative to victims of rape and assault. However, our decision to publish the details of the alleged assault, with the hope that it would turnaround the narrative that the victim was somehow being untruthful, did not return the desired result. Because of this, we apologize to the victim and her family, as well as the entire community.

The Virgin Islands Consortium has been a strong supporter of efforts of the [Virgin Islands Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council](#) (D.V.S.A.C.), as well as the [Women's Coalition of St. Croix](#). We've published their editorials, and have covered their events with stories as well as video coverage (see an example below).

[View the original embedded media](#)

Today, we spoke with representatives of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix and D.V.S.A.C., about hosting a collaborative series of discussions live on our Facebook platform, to explore ways of diminishing the rape and sexual assault culture in our community, and we look forward to have an announcement on that soon.