

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Adventists Take Public Stand Against Domestic Violence

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ST. THOMAS -- Scores of Seventh-day Adventists on the island expressed their dissent toward domestic violence during a march and rally Saturday afternoon.

Downtown Charlotte Amalie was transformed into a sea of purple as more than 100 men, women and children marched through the streets waving placards that bore messages denouncing violence against women and children and calling for an immediate end to this scourge on society.

“Real Men Beat Eggs, Not Women,” one placard read.

“Give Us Kisses, Not Kicks,” another poster declared.

“End It Now, No one Deserves Abuse,” a third sign stated.

Led by a police outpost, participants in the “End It Now” campaign braved the sweltering afternoon heat and trekked – to the sound of music provided by the Pathfinder drum corps – from the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School to the Emancipation Garden where several presenters took to the stage to address the issue of domestic violence.

Area Co-ordinator for the Women’s Ministries, one of the church’s agencies responsible for the “End It Now” initiative, explained why the church chose to speak out against domestic violence.

“‘End It Now’ builds on the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s long tradition of responding to the needs of all human beings, namely to stand up in favor of human rights, tolerance, the well-being of children, freedom of expression and conscience, and the protection and integrity of families,” Penn said. “It is a call to action for all Adventists and supporters to stand up and put into practice those principles we hold true.”

Director of the Family Resource Center, Vivian St. Juste, used the occasion to highlight the work that her organization does to assist victims and families of domestic violence. The Family Resource Center, formerly known as the Women’s Resource Center, is a 24-hour, private non-profit agency that provides a counseling program and a shelter for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. St. Juste educated the crowd about the types of abuse victims suffer – emotional, financial, psychological, spiritual, mental, physical and verbal – and said the FRC helps victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

“If you don’t stop the leak, you will always have a leak,” she said.

The “End It Now” campaign is a global initiative to raise awareness and advocate for the end of violence around the world. The ‘End It Now’ movement is the boldest stand the Seventh-day Adventist Church has ever taken regarding violence against women and children. Most recently, the drive has been expanded to include men and the elderly. Launched in October 2009 in partnership between the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), which is a prominent humanitarian organization, and the Department of Women’s Ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, “End It Now” extends to more than 200 countries and territories.

Penn said the Virgin Islands began its annual observance of “End It Now” about three years ago on the fourth Saturday in August.

“In 2014, ‘End It Now’ was first introduced to our local community,” Penn said.” In bringing awareness to our local communities, we have participated in several parades and have conducted rallies at the Tutu Park Mall and at the Emancipation Garden. Collaboratively, we have worked with the Family Resource Center and deeply appreciate the support they have given us throughout the years.”

Domestic violence has been documented as a major issue within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Incidences of abuse follow trends documented in non-Adventist populations. This is why “End It Now” seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement to effectively help end violence in every family and

community, according to the official website.

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