

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Facing Life in Prison Without Parole, Mother and Boyfriend Plead Not Guilty in Murder of 4-Year-Old Boy

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Delicia Daniel, 29, and Kyle Christopher, 22. (Credit: VIPD)

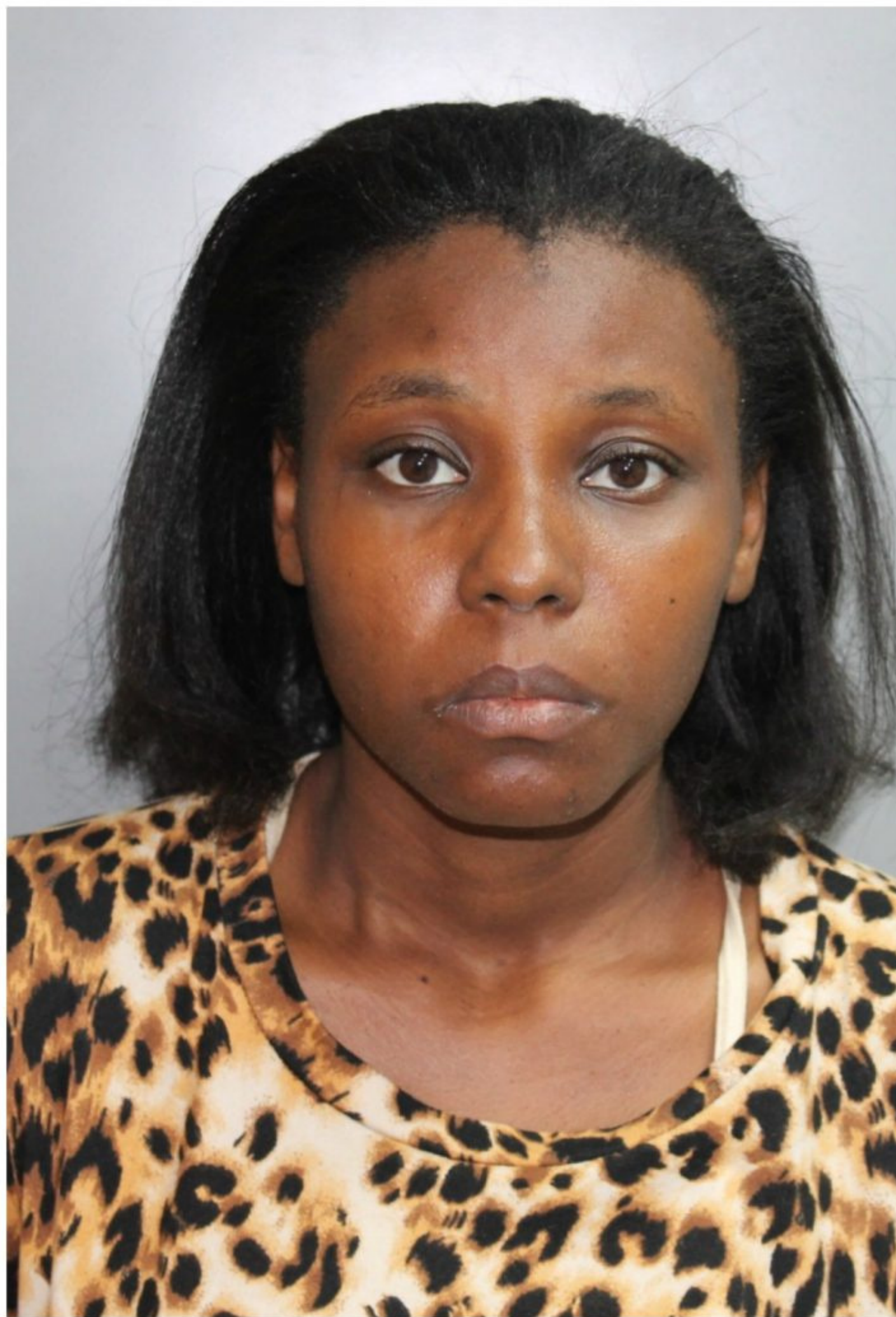
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ST. CROIX -- Delicia Daniel, the mother of 4-year-old Aaron Benjamin, Jr. who was found dead in his mother's Lorraine Village housing community apartment earlier this month, and her boyfriend, Kyle Christopher, have pleaded not guilty in the murder case of young Aaron, the Department of Justice has announced.

Attorney General Denise George said Mr. Christopher, 22, and Ms. Daniel, 29, were arraigned today in the Superior Court on formal criminal charges. The charges include first-degree murder, child abuse, child neglect, aggravated child abuse and third-degree assault.

If convicted of first-degree attempted murder, the defendants face life imprisonment without parole, D.O.J. said. (D.O.J. issued a corrected release which said the defendants were charged with first-degree attempted murder). For child abuse, they face up to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$500, or both. For child neglect, the defendants face imprisonment of 15 years and a fine of \$500, or both. For aggravated child abuse and neglect, Ms. Daniel and Mr. Christopher face not less than 5 years in prison. They also face up to 30 years imprisonment for the third-degree assault charge and a \$500 fine, or both.

Ms. George cautioned the public that the criminal investigation is a charging document, and the defendants are not guilty of the offenses until proven guilty by the court.



Delicia Daniel, 29, and Kyle Christopher, 22. (Credit: VIPD)

As previously reported by the Consortium, it was revealed during the advisement hearing that the father had been attempting to gain custody of his son fearing that the boy was being abused by his mother and her boyfriend. Yet even after numerous attempts and after registering a number of complaints with the Dept. of Human Services, he was not granted custody. During the advisement hearing earlier this month, it was further revealed that the deceased boy's sister, who is also the child of the father, Aaron Benjamin Sr., also experienced a pattern of abuse by the mother and her boyfriend.

According to a person with intimate knowledge of the matter, Mr. Benjamin's experience with the Dept. of Human Services while attempting to alert the department of the abuse of his children was disheartening. "They even hung up the phone on him a number of times," this person said. Following the death of Mr. Benjamin's 4-year-old son, D.H.S. has been reaching out to the father, and has also offered to pay for funeral costs — an offer the father, according to this person, did not accept.

Ms. Daniel and Mr. Christopher — the latter who admitted to beating the child causing him to fall and hit his head against a chair — were remanded to the Golden Grove Detention Center after failing to make bail of \$1 million.

In a statement [issued Oct. 17](#), Dept. of Human Services Kimberley Causey-Gomez said, "The men and women of the Department of Human Services are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of one of the youngest among us. Social workers in the Virgin Islands work every day to stop potential harm to the territory's children and youth. However, when children are hurt or worse, it is imperative that we investigate and arrive at answers and solutions immediately."

Black and blue eye, bite marks, more abuse

According to the affidavit, the deceased child, who was examined by Dr. Leslie Burton at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, was dead on arrival. He also had a black and blue left eye, bite marks and fresh and old abrasions.

Officers said the girl child told police that "Daddy Kyle beats her and her brother with a black stick."

Father speaks out

Mr. Benjamin told police that a court order prevented him from having his children, and that the mother had kept them away from him since June. He told police that both his children had told him they were being beaten by Mr. Christopher, and that since April, he noticed his daughter had a black eye. The children had also expressed to their father that they did not want to go back to their mother's Lorraine Village apartment. And as relayed to the Consortium by a source, Mr. Benjamin told police that he made several reports to the Dept. of Human Services concerning the abuse.

Young Aaron Benjamin, Jr. dies

Mr. Christopher told police that on Oct. 10 at about 7:00 a.m., he slapped Aaron in the face for stealing his sister's Caprisun drink. The boy stumbled and fell, hitting his head

against a chair. Thereafter, Aaron started to vomit, according to Mr. Christopher, who also told police that the boy continued vomiting and stumbling throughout the day.

The following day, Oct. 11, Aaron's condition hadn't improved. Mr. Christopher told police that at about noon that day, Aaron asked to use the bathroom but couldn't stand on his own, so he had to be assisted. The boy then stopped breathing, Mr. Christopher told detectives, according to the affidavit.

Initially, Ms. Daniel told detectives that Mr. Christopher did not strike the children and that she was the only one to do so. Ms. Daniel later changed her statement to concede that Mr. Christopher did hit the children, although she said it wasn't in her presence.

Backstory

VIPD Public Information Officer Glen Dratte told the Consortium on Oct. 11 that the 911 emergency call center had received notification of the incident at about 12:59 p.m. Officers and EMS personnel were immediately dispatched to the scene, and upon arrival, emergency personnel administered CPR on the boy to no avail.

In the initial V.I.P.D. release, police said the boy was found badly abused and was malnourished. Additionally, the VIPD's preliminary investigation with medical personnel into the incident found that the boy had varying stages of lacerations, which suggested he was badly beaten.

Police Commissioner Velinor said, "The circumstances of this tragedy is being investigated. I will assure the community that our officers will investigate this matter thoroughly and hold those involved accountable for their actions. We have a responsibility to protect our children from danger."