

The Virgin Islands Consortium

'You Did Everything You Could to Prevent this from Happening': An Emotional Goodbye to Young Aaron Benjamin

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Ernice Gilbert **November 03, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- During an emotional funeral service on Saturday at the Beulah A.M.E. Zion Church in Estate Bethlehem, Aaron Benjamin, Jr. -- who was found dead in his mother's Lorraine Village apartment in October, and whose mother, Delicia Daniel, 29, and her boyfriend, Kyle Christopher, 22, were both charged with the murder of the boy -- was remembered before his body was taken to the Kingshill Cemetery for burial. He was buried on his 5th birthday.

[View the original embedded media](#)

Aaron Benjamin Sr. did not speak at the funeral, but his brother, Ashbel Benjamin, spoke of how Mr. Benjamin had changed his life following the birth of his two children. "What he went through was a tragedy that no one should face," said Ashbel, who resides in Texas. "I did not know my nephew as well as the rest of my family, but I do know he was brave -- the bravest 4-year-old I had the pleasure of knowing. No matter what he went through behind closed doors, he was never afraid to tell the truth when those doors were opened up."

Ashbel added, "He told his father everything and his father did everything he could. I know you did everything you could to prevent this from happening, but I ask that you keep your head up," Ashbel asked of his brother. "Stay strong. You have family, you have friends, basically you have the whole island behind of you. You have an amazing little girl over there full of energy... Azariah, we are always here for you. We will love you, we will protect you and we will be by your side at all times."



Funeral service at the Beulah A.M.E. Zion Church in Estate Bethlehem, St. Croix
(Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

As people walked up the aisle of the small church to view the body, emotions gave way to tears. At one point, Azariah, her innocence on full display, was consoling her aunt, telling her that she should stop crying.

Ms. Daniel and Mr. Christopher have pleaded not guilty in the murder case of young Aaron, the Department of Justice announced last week.

Attorney General Denise George said the suspects were arraigned 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. 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.



A hearse outside the A.M.E. Church in Estate Bethlehem (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

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."



The Celebration of Life of

Aaron Benjamin, Jr.

Sunrise: November 2, 2014 | Sunset: October 11, 2019

Picture of Aaron Benjamin, Jr. at funeral service (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

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.



Relatives view body of Aaron Benjamin, Jr. (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

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

Former 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.



Closed casket of Aaron Benjamin, Jr. (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

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."

Feature Image: Aaron Benjamin, Jr. in a casket for viewing at the A.M.E. Church on Saturday (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

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