

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Police Say Fight Led to Shooting of 20-Year-Old Woman on Highway

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Law enforcement officers blocked a portion of the Melvin Evans Highway, heading west beginning at the Economic Development Authority's (EDA) Industrial Park intersection, as they investigated the homicide on Sunday, Sept. 13, 2020. By. VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — The Virgin Islands Police Department said Monday that a fight led to the shooting and killing of 20-year-old Reynisha Juanita Rivera. Ms. Rivera was targeted and followed while she was driving on the Melvin Evans Highway on Sunday, Sept. 13 near the intersection at the Economic Development Authority's Industrial Park. Her pursuers then [shot her to death while she was driving](#).

Naomi Joseph, chief of detectives at the V.I.P.D., said of the crime, "The why is a fight that occurred and the answer to that is revenge. So this was about revenge."

The incident stunned a community already overwhelmed with senseless killings. Less than a month earlier, a 16-year-old named Tintawee Christian — a promising young man praised by teachers and students alike — [was gunned down](#) while walking home in Sion Farm, his neighborhood. He was believed to be uninvolved in any matter that may have prompted retaliation.

As for Ms. Rivera, she was believed to be a young individual with a lot of drive to succeed before her life was cut short.

Police Commissioner Trevor Velinor lauded officers for their determined and swift work.

"The primary and sole focus at that particular moment was to try to figure out what happened," he said of officers involved in the investigation.

St. Croix Police Chief Sidney Elskoe followed Mr. Velinor in praise for the officers. "The Criminal Investigation Bureau worked tirelessly to solve this case and I appreciate all their efforts," he said. Chief Elskoe also recognized members of the V.I. Crime Initiative, an effort started by Mr. Velinor. Members of the group on St. Croix have so far recovered 7 firearms and have made several arrests.

Chief Elskoe commended Sergeant Jamalè R. Griffin for his efforts with the VI Crime Initiative, in what the chief said was the breaking of barriers between the community and police. They have "worked to remove the invisible walls that separate the community," he said. "It is my opinion that we cannot ignore how important it is to breakdown those barriers, as success for our community requires generational change."

The chief went on to highlight Sergeant Arthur Joseph, who has worked closely with the "Click It or Ticket" initiative. So far the initiative has resulted in 800 citations, several arrests and multiple firearms have been seized this year.

Lastly, the chief thanked the community for providing invaluable tips: "The message 'we are all in this together' has been realized. We continue to receive many phone calls and we thank you for that," he said.

Even so, the chief cautioned, "Please, make no mistake, the war against crime is not over. The birds have not began chirping and the rainbows in the skies have not appeared. We all have a lot more work to do."

The territory has seen 40 homicides so far for 2020: 21 on St. Croix, 18 in St. Thomas and 1 on St. John, according to Mr. Velinor.