

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Wear Orange This Weekend For Gun Violence Awareness Day

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June 4th is the National Gun Violence Awareness Day , and Gun Violence is a problem that the Virgin Islands is too familiar with as the territory has already lost an alarming 21 people, with 18 of those incidents happening on St. Croix, in 2021 . Wear Orange, an organization that raises awareness about gun violence, is a campaign asking people to wear orange to “demonstrate our collective power as members of the gun violence prevention movement, bringing together a broad spectrum of organizations, brands, and influencers working in different ways to curb gun violence” the organization's website says.

The website explains “the color orange is the color that Hadiya Pendleton’s friends wore in her honor when she was shot and killed in Chicago at the age of 15 — just one week after performing at President Obama’s 2nd inaugural parade in 2013. After her death, they asked us to stand up, speak out, and Wear Orange to raise awareness about gun violence.

Ms. Pendleton’s mother, Cleopatra Cowley-Pendleton, wrote an article in Newsweek on what would have been her daughter’s 24th birthday.

She described that fateful day in the article, “Hadiya was shot and killed at 15 while celebrating the end of her exams at a park on the south side of Chicago. On January 29 2013, she was huddled with her friends under a shelter from the rain when a man ran through the park and shot indiscriminately into the crowd of children.”

“This time of year is always bittersweet for my family. A few days after Hadiya’s birthday, we will gather on June 4 to honor victims and survivors for National Gun Violence Awareness Day, a day that was born from the gun violence prevention activism after her death. I stand in awe of the movement that Hadiya’s short, bright life helped spark. I can picture the wide smile she’d wear knowing that all this is the result of the energy she inspired in her friends and family. From the moment she was born, I knew my baby would change the world. But I wish it didn’t have to be in this way,” Cleopatra said about how the movement makes her family feel.

She explained what the color orange was chosen and how the movement began. “Her friends chose the color orange because it is bright and powerful and conveys a simple message: don’t shoot us. From there, our movement grew, and on what would have been Hadiya’s 18th birthday, we launched the Wear Orange campaign which, in turn, inspired National Gun Violence Awareness Day.

The full article can be read [here](#).

The Wear Orange website says, “Wear Orange originated on June 2, 2015—what would have been Hadiya’s 18th birthday. Now, it is observed nationally on the first Friday in June and the following weekend each year. This year, National Gun Violence Awareness Day will be June 4, 2021,” and “the color orange honors the more than 100 lives cut short and the hundreds more wounded by gun violence everyday.”

The website's about page finishes with stating, "Wear Orange Weekend is an opportunity for us to show the country just how powerful we are. But the work doesn't end there. Everytown and our partner organizations continue to do life-saving work so that we can get closer to realizing a future free from gun violence. We wear orange to be seen, and demand that we be heard."

Support for the movement has poured in on twitter from political figures while calling for action on Friday.

Former President Barack Obama said on Twitter "On National Gun Violence Awareness Day, we [#wearorange](#) to honor those we've lost. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, let's not forget the other epidemic killing far too many Americans—and keep working to pass commonsense gun safety laws that will protect our communities."

Former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton tweeted, "This weekend, [#wearorange](#). It's a way to recognize all the lives we've tragically lost to gun violence and show our commitment to saving more families from needless pain."

Pennsylvania Senator John Kane tweeted, "Today, my staff and I (and Bailey!) [#WearOrange](#) to raise awareness about gun violence. We have an obligation to take action to prevent gun violence in America. Tell your legislators -- the time to act is now."

California Congressman, Eric Swalwell tweeted, "On Gun Violence Awareness Day, I [#WearOrange](#) for the survivors who show up with courage & strength each day, for the families whose lives have been forever changed, and for the countless loved ones taken too soon. A future without gun violence is possible. Let's make it happen."

One of Maryland's Congressional Representatives, John Sarbanes, tweeted, "Gun violence is an American public health crisis. On National Gun Violence Awareness Day, I call on my Senate colleagues to finally take up [#HR8](#), close the [#CharlestonLoophole](#) and strengthen our nation's background check system."

Georgia Representative, David Scott tweeted, "I am proud to [#WearOrange](#) today in support of a future free from gun violence. The tragedy brought into communities, families and neighborhoods by gun violence is preventable."

Sharice Davids, Kansas Representative in Congress, tweeted “Today, I am thinking of victims of senseless gun violence and their loved ones. Too many lives have been cut short by the epidemic of gun violence in our country. Today, we reflect. Tomorrow, we continue the fight to end this crisis. [#WearOrange](#)”

Wear Orange this weekend for the lives of too many Virgin Islands that were victims of gun violence incidents.

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