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A Massage, Shower and Sex Toys: 3rd Person to Accuse Steven Payne of Inappropriate Behavior Comes Forward

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Steffi Emilien performed with the V.I. Avengerz Band during the Children's Parade of V.I. Carnival 2017. She is now 21 years old. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Over the weekend, a young woman reached out to Consortium journalists, telling us that having seen our reporting on the [sexual harassment](#) allegations [against Senator Steven Payne](#), she too was ready to tell her story of abuse against her perpetrated, she said, by Senator Payne.

Steffi Emilien was sent to live in the U.S. Virgin Islands around the age of seven. Her Saint Lucian mother was struggling to support the family, and a family acquaintance offered to accommodate the young girl in St. John, USVI so that she could have access to better education

and healthcare than was available in her home country. She was enrolled in the Julius E Sprauve School, where she says she first met a law enforcement officer who was assigned to that institution - Steven Payne.

“At the time I met him I was in 3rd grade. To be honest, I knew him for a long time, but he didn’t remember me. I was actually in his marching band - I used to play quads in his marching band, but he didn’t remember me. We didn’t get to start speaking until I was in 7th grade and I was in choir. He needed someone to sing in his son’s band, the V.I. Avengerz, and they saw me singing in an event I had in 7th grade. He asked me if I wanted to join the band and I said okay,” Emilien told the Consortium. Payne was one of the managers of the V.I. Avengerz Band.

Emilien says her initial living arrangements quickly deteriorated to become oppressive and abusive, and her caregiver threatened to send her back home. Before that happened, she says that Payne intervened.

Emilien recounted, “she didn’t like me being out of the house. She started saying she was tired of me, she wanted to send me back home to my parents in Saint Lucia. Officer Payne was there, he ended up making me call my mother to tell my mother what’s going on. He told her not to worry, that he would take care of me, and he’d be like a father to me. That’s what he told my mother, and he made my mother sign papers giving him permission to be my guardian, and that he would start the adoption process”.

Emilien said that shortly after that conversation, she left her original caregiver to live with a woman who served as the other manager of the V.I. Avengerz. This was in 2017, before the devastating hurricanes Irma and Maria upended island life. Things had settled a bit for Emilien in her new accommodations, until she says one day, Payne told her that they would take a trip to St. Thomas, just the two of them.

"Remember, I was starting to get close to him because I saw him as my father. I didn’t grow up with my father and stuff, and he took it upon himself to take care of me, so I saw him as my dad. I saw Steven, his son, as my brother. I remember around that same time he was going through his divorce, he was talking to me about it. I didn’t think nothing about it - we went to St. Thomas that night, he said that it would be just me and him spending time together, and I thought that was a good idea. So we ended up going to St. Thomas. After we came from St. Thomas, I want to say it was around 8-9 o’clock, it was dark outside. After we came up from the boat, he told me that he forgot something in the band room. So I said okay, and we ended up walking up to the band room. In the band room, they had a desk chair that was in the band room, and we had these two orange couches. So I was sitting on the couch, and the thing about Mr. Payne is, he has a way of manipulating you. Like the way he talks, the stuff he says, it’s like he’s trying to manipulate you - like make you feel like you’re vulnerable, you know? Obviously, with him being this big man and I’m 5’3”...

"From the time I’ve been in the band, he’s always been like, if you don’t do what he say, he tends to act different towards you, like he gets an attitude. If you don’t go by what he say, it’s an issue. And the whole time I didn’t have nobody. So when we went into the band room, he tell me to come. So when I came, he basically made me sit on him, almost like cuddling him, and then he was just talking to me and stuff. By the time I check, his tongue was all up in my mouth and stuff," Emilien told the Consortium.

Emilien says that Payne released her when he realized her extreme discomfort. She says the incident drove her into a deep depression. The then 17-year old explained that she felt especially

isolated since the woman with whom she was staying was a close associate of the man who'd told her he would take care of her. The young woman said she felt especially betrayed by Payne's alleged actions since she had confided in him about a previous incident of similar nature.

"After I was going through everything already, that was just adding to stuff I wanted to avoid. Because I spoke to him before about something similar like that happening to me when I was small in Saint Lucia - I spoke to him about that and he just used it against me. He know all of this stuff was happening to me but he still did it. And I didn't know who to turn to because he was the only person I had," she said.

That was the first time Steffi Emilien says she was sexually assaulted by the man who now represents the U.S. Virgin Islands in the 34th Legislature, but, according to her, it was not the last. Emilien recounts being relocated to Florida in the aftermath of the twin 2017 hurricanes, and Payne, still allegedly her legal guardian, visiting her there, in Kissimmee. She says that he picked her up from her home and drove for several hours, on their way to Universal Studios.

Before they arrived at the theme park, however, Emilien says she and Payne overnighted in a hotel, where she says the second inappropriate interaction occurred.

"He went on to taking off his clothes, and is basically butt naked telling me that he wants a massage. I mean, what can I do? I can't run, I can't go nowhere. I don't know the people, I don't know the place, this man is scary, so whatever he say is just that. Like I said before, his attitude is that if you don't do what he say, he just ... he's willful. Like he would do something spitefully, like that's just his attitude. So yes I went on to giving him the massage, but I was not comfortable. And I know he could have seen it in my face because I was not comfortable at all. "

After the massage, Emilien says Payne requested something else.

"He told me when his daughter used to come over to St. Thomas to visit him, she used to bathe with him. So he went on to basically push me to take a shower with him. I was terrified the whole time, my heart was just racing, and I was like Lord, I just hope this man doesn't force me to do anything else I do not want to do. I just hope this doesn't lead into penetration or anything like that."

After the massage and shower, Emilien says that the next morning, she and Payne met up with his son, and continued their trip to Universal. She went on to say that because the two previous incidents happened months apart, she was not expecting to be assaulted a third time, especially since this time both were reportedly at his sister's house in Jacksonville Florida.

"So his sister has four rooms in the house. The guest room was all the way to the end of the upstairs hallway. We were supposed to go to the movies or something. I remember I was wearing a grey Nike jacket, I remember. Then he called me in the room, but I didn't think anything was going to happen there because this is your sister's house, you understand? The thing about all these events was, it's wasn't like back-to back, so it wasn't something that my mind was on. So when he called me to his room, I didn't think that something was going to happen. When I end up in the room, he basically told me take off my pants and get on the bed. So that was when my heart started to race because I was like what to do? His sister not there, even if I scream, nobody can hear me because of where the house is.

"So at that point I didn't even know what to do. Then the man took out one of those silver bullet vibrators, that have a remote - I don't know, but something like that - and he was just talking to

me and then he told me “this is what you do”. At that moment, I could have just died. I felt like just dying. If I could have a gun and just shoot myself in the head, it would be better than this. “

In addition to these alleged three specific incidents, Emilien also described moments of conversation where she says Payne would discuss masturbation as a way to relieve stress. When asked why she never told anyone about what was going on, she said she was too afraid. Emilien said that Payne’s inability to control his anger left her fearful of her safety, especially because of the large size disparity between the burly senator and the then 17-year old who stands at 5 foot 3. However that fear, she said, turned into determination after she read the Consortium’s reporting on Chezni Jones, the first woman who had publicly accused Payne of inappropriate behavior. Emilien also said she felt compelled to speak out now because of her concern that there may be other survivors of Payne’s alleged inappropriate advances.

“The scary part about all of this for me is I don’t know if he did it to any other little girls. Because before me they had so much other girls in the band. Before me, he was working with all types of females - and the thing about it is, he never used to really like boys around him too much, it’s always the females. So I don't even know who else this man do that to. And if it wasn’t for Chez coming out and tell her story, I don't even know if I would have had the courage to say anything. Because I spoke to my mother about it, I told my mother how I felt and stuff, and my mother started to cry. And I told my mother I don’t even know who to go to to speak to, because I don't know if anybody will believe me,” Emilien said.

After we conducted the interview with Steffi Emilien on Tuesday night, Consortium journalists spent the entirety of Wednesday attempting to contact Senator Payne for comment. Because the allegations were so serious and so specific, we wanted to give the senator every opportunity to refute or rebut Emilien’s claims. Reporters from both the Video News desk as well as our head office in St. Croix called and messaged the Senator’s personal mobile phone, and called his office as well as the office of his chief of staff. Nobody picked up any of the calls or responded to any of the messages and voicemails. With Payne already being investigated by his Senate colleagues due to allegations of sexual harassment by one of his young, female Senate staffers, it is unclear how these new allegations will impact those proceedings.