

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Governor Bryan Calls for Peace and Tolerance Following Tragic Weekend Violence

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Then-Governor-elect Albert Bryan in December 2018 spoke at a prayer vigil organized by the VI Clergy Peace Coalition, which was held at the Frederiksted Vegetable Market following deadly shootings on St. Croix at the time. By. GOV'T HOUSE

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has called for peace, tolerance and consideration in the wake of what he called a tragic weekend. The governor spoke at the Gov't House Monday press briefing in wake of two violent murders.

As the Consortium previously reported, [19-year-old Jahmari Joshawn Santiago was killed](#) outside a nightclub in Peter's Rest in a Sunday morning shooting which left five other

individuals injured. In a separate incident, [54-year-old Ersdale I. Joseph died](#) after he was allegedly willfully struck down by a vehicle which Hubert Lee Sr. is said to have used as a murder weapon.

According to Governor Bryan, there is nothing ordinary about consoling grief-stricken families in the wake of senseless killings. He offered sincere condolences to the families and extended prayers for the five gunshot victims currently receiving care. In his public statement, the governor stressed that these incidents within such a small community leave in their wake a collective grief, as all residents are so intimately connected.

Acknowledging that many Virgin Islanders are currently dealing with stressful issues which consume them, Mr. Bryan noted that the government continues to invest in programs like 'Our Best Life' to get people active and engaged post-pandemic. The initiative seeks to improve physical, mental and emotional well-being through various activities, services and events. He also noted that the administration is making a serious effort to invest in parks as a means of encouraging youth and adult recreation. Other crime alleviation measures highlighted by the governor include efforts to modernize and improve behavioral health services. He promised that the government will be making some announcements regarding this in due course.

The governor further asserted that efforts will continue through the Virgin Islands Police Department, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and comprehensive collaboration with federal partners to encourage positive youth engagement. Deterring the use of illegal firearms, removing violent offenders from the streets and curbing the proliferation of guns entering the territory are also key focus points of the government's crime-fighting strategy, Mr. Bryan said.

The governor concluded his statement by encouraging Virgin Islanders to look out for one another and take a moment to think before acting, considering the circumstances of others.

He implored the community to "take things down a notch" and take a moment to reflect and give some love back to fellow residents.