

We Shall Not Die But Live
“How the Virgin Islands Will Stop the Excessive Violence in its Community”

Kristell K. Joseph

Jason Carroll Memorial Fund Scholarship Essay

56! What does this number mean? This was the Virgin Islands homicide count in 2009. The Virgin Islands homicide rate was almost ten times the national average in 2009. –“Virgin Island Daily News of St.Thomas”. What is the first thing that comes to mind after reading that sentence? The first thing that probably came to your mind was why are there so many violent crimes in such a small community? But in my opinion the question that should be ask is, why do we as Virgin Islanders allow such acts of violence to continue? While reading an article in the Daily News I came across many names and cases, and I thought to myself “most of these victims are young adults,” young adults that maybe had an opportunity previous to their death to report that they were assaulted, but never summed up the courage to do so. We see and hear about situations like these all the time. Whether it’s a St. Croix woman, that was found dead on St. Thomas, or when the young man got shot on Christmas Eve by police officers, or even when the 21 year old died from a bullet he took in an alleyway. These cases were and are being heard around the islands, but what are we doing about it? What can we do about it? The Virgin Islands is our home and we are the Virgin Islands, meaning that when one of us dies we all die. So, why don’t we put a stop to all the violence in the Virgin Islands?

We have tried it all, walks against crimes, protesting, and even live speeches by the governor about the crimes in the Virgin Islands. Still, so far for 2010 the territory is not doing any better. So, I came up with my own violence prevention plans. In my opinion we must first try to put ourselves in the criminal’s position. What do I acquire when I kill somebody? If someone kills my love one, how would I respond? Why should I commit a crime even though I know I will get caught? It’s hard to put ourselves in a position of a criminal but have you ever thought about how hard it is to put a criminal in our position. With my violence prevention plan, that is what I plan to acquire, putting the criminal in my shoes. The first step I plan on taking is to first interview people that were or is a criminal, whether they’re in jail or on the streets. After getting real feedbacks from these people I will then create a youth program called “Putting a

Stop before It Starts”, this will allow me to introduce the ways to stop violence to the youth of the Virgin Island. While setting up this program a social program should be opened for the criminals that are already involved in crimes or are thinking about committing a crime.

I already know many people that I went to school with that dropped out and are now hanging around on the streets. So it would not be difficult to acquire information from them. I will also like to interview people that committed crimes and are imprisoned or back on the streets. After asking numerous questions about “life on the streets”, I have come to the conclusion that the young adults on the streets are plain out bored. They do not work and have too much time on their hands. Since they have no responsibilities, by choice; as a result they have no ethics and are irresponsible. I believe that out of boredom these young people commit crimes to try to get ahead in life “The Easy Way”. These people want everything for nothing and the most with very little effort, and the only way to accomplish this is through crimes. To detour these young adults from committing crimes I will put my violence prevention plan in action as soon as possible.

In my opinion the best way to prevent violence is to first prevent people from becoming violators. The second step to this violence prevention plan is to commence a youth program, “Putting a Stop before It Starts”. This program welcomes youths attending middle school to high school that are interested in attending. This program pledges to guide these young adults and give them a chance to succeed in life and strive for excellence. Getting involved in activities, distributing rewards, and traveling around the world are just some of the things this youth program would offer. These programs will be guided and taught by adults that have experiences working with criminals or adults that were once criminals. This program will also allow students of both genders and all ages to be welcomed with no fee; giving parents no excuse to get their children involved.

Everyone is gifted with a talent some of us know how to use it and some of us don't. By creating this Social program for these adults called "Stopping it after it starts", this will give them the opportunity to find their talent and use it in a positive way. By providing Jobs and skill classes, that violators are interested in. The violators on the streets are people just like us. Straying from the bad by giving them something they enjoy doing will get more young adults off the streets. If they like working with weapons then, we can coheres them to join the military. If they have brilliant business minds and can understand the logistics of selling narcotics, we can help them start legitimate businesses. "Stopping it after it starts", will be an excellent program for these people. Showing them that stealing, killing and abusing are not the answers for everything and that working hard for what you want gets you more than what you work for.

"Putting a stop before crimes start" and "stopping it after it starts", will be huge steps to take. My crime prevention plans are what I think would be the best solution for putting an end to the violence in our community. So I ask again, why do we as Virgin Islanders allow such acts of violence to continue? Why don't we put a stop to all the violence in the Virgin Islands? Now we can, we will no longer sit aside and read the bad news in the Daily newspaper, but celebrate because one off our youth has made it off the streets. We will no longer hear the gun shots and night and then police sirens right after any more, but instead we will be able to hear the laughter of our love ones that were once on the streets around the family table at dinner. No more would we have more drops out students than graduates, but we will have so many graduates that graduations would be held in stadiums and not auditoriums. I think that my prevention plan should be added to the list of No More Violence plans and we as Virgin Islanders would come together and die no more.