

# Who Has Next?

by Dwane Callwood  
October 21, 2011

Another outburst of gunfire, two more young lives cut short. As the community mourns the loss of two more young Virgin Islanders, we are yet left again to ask the question: Why? I don't profess to know all the contributing factors, much less the complete solution to the underlying problem.

I am appealing to youth of the Virgin Islands, to lay down your weapons. Real Talk! It is by design that you have much easier access to guns and ammunition, than to an educational system that teaches you the greatness of the people from which we descended. Think about it. Our eurocentric educational system teaches that men the likes of Christopher Columbus, who came to the Caribbean, stole and murdered are heroes, while there is little mentioned about Hubert Harrison, David Hamilton Jackson, or J. Antonio Jarvis.

As conscious members of the community stand up to challenge the systemic erosion of our quality of life in the US Virgin Islands, we are subjected to ridicule, false accusations, discriminatory practices, persecution, hatred, threats, and harassment, etc. These predatory antics have been used to intimidate and suppress the spirit of Queen Mary and General Buddhoe that resides in each and every one of us. Yet, we continue to push forward, unaffected by any efforts to quiet the voice of the people, for there is much work to be done.

Throughout the struggle, many have implied that our efforts are in vain because our people have been lulled into a permanent slumber by a terrible thing called complacency. While complacency may have established itself across our community, we have no fear that eventually our people will get it. Our people will rise again. Globally, we are seeing a phenomenon where people who have been stripped of their rights and oppressed for decades, are standing up and through the strength of unity reclaiming the quality of life they rightfully deserve.

As we move ahead, we worry not about the reluctance of our generation to participate in the movement. What concerns us is the ability to keep the movement going. If all of our young men and women are caught up in this vicious cycle of violence, who will be left to step up and take the torch? We need you to put down your guns and arm yourselves with the knowledge of who we truly are as a people. Arm yourself with the understanding that those who came before us sacrificed a lot so that we could live a better life than they did. Arm yourself with the understanding that this cycle of violence has been designed to have us keep ourselves enslaved. Hundreds of years ago they realized that to emphasize our differences would lead to infighting amongst ourselves. Despite all that we have in common, much was made as to the color of our eyes, light-skinned versus dark-skinned, house slave versus field slave. As a youngster in school, the emphasis was on differences in place of birth. Never did I anticipate seeing this senseless division getting to this point. As the level of violence has steadily increased, the situation has deteriorated to the point that the emphasis is now often neighborhood versus neighborhood. It's very depressing to hear young people talk about it.

Does it make sense that on an island merely 13 miles long and less than 3 miles wide, young people can declare that their neighborhood is “warring” against another? What is the prize to be had? Is there an end game? What benchmark or goal determines who is victorious? These are the questions none of the young people I speak to can answer. Yet, they can declare another young person a mortal enemy because he happens to reside in a particular neighborhood.

I appeal to you, future leaders of the Virgin Islands, arm yourselves not with guns and ammunition allowed onto the territory’s streets to assist in your self-destruction, but arm yourself with the knowledge and sense of purpose that will help you realize your full potential. There is a saying that irks the very heart of me: ***“If you want to hide something from Black people, put it in a book”***. As much as I detest that saying, I must admit that relative to most black people it is true. Do you part to make that sentiment a thing of the past. I leave you, for now, with two sayings that I find to be very accurate:

- ***Those who do not learn from their History, are doomed to repeat it***
- ***Knowledge IS Power***

Lay Down those guns, we’re going to need you down the road. Do you have next?

Dwane Callwood