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**Girlfriendism™ H.O.P.E. Hosts #DanceForHOPEVI Initiative
In Honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

Girlfriendism™ H.O.P.E. - the non profit branch of the Girlfriendism™ Campaign which stands for Helping Ordinary People Everyday *to be extraordinary through the arts and creative expression* - **hosted the second annual #DanceForHOPEVI initiative on Saturday, October 30th, 2021 at the Beeston Hill Health and Wellness Center in honor of domestic violence awareness month!**

Founded by members of the Simmonds Family, H.O.P.E. - a newly incorporated domestic non-profit and the philanthropic arm of Girlfriendism - is led by Director and Founder of Girlfriendism™, Khnuma Simmonds. According to Khnuma, *'I was positively overwhelmed to witness the response of the community in support of our second annual #DanceForHOPEVI initiative. Though we only*

offered 20 spaces due to COVID, there were upwards of 45 individuals - diverse in age, ethnicity and backgrounds - who arrived wearing purple to join H.O.P.E. in raising awareness on domestic violence through dance. This turn out speaks volumes in regards to the community support that exists for survivors and the need for programming that promotes the arts - particularly music and dance - as an avenue for individual and collective healing. As a survivor and advocate, it was a joy to celebrate my birthday in community for a cause that continues to affect our community and to do so with intention - from specific music and movements to positive affirmations as a collective. Despite what we've all experienced directly or indirectly, each participant still found it within themselves to hold space for hope and healing for survivors and our community at large.' The initiative which was live streamed via FaceBook from multiple pages including that of Beeston Hill Health and Wellness who provided the space and SoKh Caribbean Dance Fitness who hosted the dance class, has reached over 1k views collectively and continues to reach the community and raise awareness even beyond October (the internationally designated month for domestic violence awareness). H.O.P.E. released a compilation video capturing the experience including words of HOPE from #DanceForHOPEVI participants to survivors of domestic violence. To view the video, please follow the link: <https://youtu.be/85MOkHaeqn0>.

H.O.P.E. represents a consortium of innovative projects that are created to address individual and community trauma - particularly domestic and sexual violence - through the arts. They have hosted a series of awareness events during the months of October and April including HOPE Talks - conversations with survivors of domestic and sexual violence on their journeys of hope and healing. Much thanks to the first annual Girlfriendism Retreat this past August, \$1,131 of seed money was raised to support the work of this organization and its efforts to secure fiscal sponsorship with a local fiduciary. Special thanks goes out to the Beeston Hill Health & Wellness Center, H.O.P.E. Board of Directors, Ifa Massey, Maria Stiles, A Better Day Cafe and to the past and upcoming survivors and collaborators of H.O.P.E. for their unwavering commitment to the project and our vision.

For more information on how you can get involved or to support the efforts of H.O.P.E., please email girlfriendism@gmail.com or check out our website at www.girlfriendism.com/g-hope.

About Girlfriendism™ H.O.P.E.:

H.O.P.E. is a non profit initiative governed by members of the Simmonds Family. Inspired by the creativity and community advocacy of the family unit, H.O.P.E. stands for Helping Ordinary People Everyday to be extraordinary through the arts and creative expression. It aims to foster social impact and create social change by utilizing the arts to promote social justice, healing and empowerment for individuals, families and the community. Our vision is to create a culture of healing in the community by cultivating hope through the arts.

About the Executive Director:

Khnuma is the owner of My Girlfriend's Closet St. Croix, Founder of SoKh Caribbean Dance Fitness, Founder of Girlfriendism™ and Director of H.O.P.E.! Khnuma is a full time entrepreneur since her former role as the Executive Director of the V.I. Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Council (DVSAC). She holds a B.A. in Communications and Dance from Hofstra University and an M.A. in Education Guidance & Counseling from the University of the Virgin Islands - St. Croix Campus. She is currently a PhD candidate at Capella University where she is completing her dissertation on domestic violence and dance in partial fulfillment of the PhD in Advanced Studies in Human Behavior as well as a recent graduate of the Executive Program in Leadership Strategy for Violence & Abuse Prevention at the University of Pennsylvania - Ortner Center on Violence and Abuse. She is currently enrolled in the alternate route program to become a certified Movement Therapist through the American Dance Therapy Association. Khnuma is also a survivor of domestic and sexual violence.

Photos Below/Attached

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