

Clema S. Williams-Lewis

Inspiring Protector of the Vulnerable, Profound Servant of Justice, Peace and Healing
Doctor of Humane Letters

Martin Luther King Jr. stated that “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” Clema S. Lewis is a woman who has chosen to live her life in the pursuit of justice for those marginalized in society through word and action. As a social worker, she has touched the lives of those she helped to heal including victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. Her life’s work for justice does not only pertain to victims of violent crimes but also to workers. She has served as the Union Representative for Steel Workers of America and as the Building Representative for the American Federation of Teachers.

Lewis’ interest in justice issues can be traced back to her undergraduate days at Illinois State University where she pursued a major in Criminal Justice. Upon completing her Bachelor of Science degree, Lewis relocated to St. Croix in 1979 and assumed the responsibility as the first female social worker with the Youth Services Administration at the Youth Rehabilitation Center. Upon completing her Master of Arts degree from the University of Phoenix in Counselor Education, Lewis served as a counselor for the Day Adult Education Program and for ten years worked as the guidance counselor at Evelyn Williams Elementary School.



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While working at Evelyn Williams, Lewis began volunteering at the Women’s Coalition of St. Croix (WCSC). She was attracted to the WCSC because of the organization’s position on fighting all forms of oppression including physical abuse, sexual assault, racism, and prejudice. Initially, she volunteered as an advocate and then assumed the positions of Chairperson of Advocates, Coordinator of Training and Support Groups, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, Supervisor of the Summer Staff, Co-Director, and presently as Executive Director. In addition to work-related responsibilities, Lewis is an active volunteer in community groups that are close to her heart including Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Council, the St. Croix Child Abuse and Neglect Task Force, and the St. Croix Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Team. Additionally, she serves on the boards of VI Interstate Compact for Juveniles, and the USVI Commission on Aging and has been a member of Altona Baptist Church for over 30 years.

With a background working with children, Lewis was adamant about getting the Territory to pass the Child Protection Act, which was passed in 2002. She believes strongly that adults must care for children and be their voice. As a social worker, Lewis values the critical importance of the family in raising children who are productive members of society. As a mother, she believes that her greatest achievement is raising two young men with the skills necessary for a smooth transition into adulthood. She is proud of her family – son Jamil and his wife Brandi and their son, Miles; and son Onaje and his wife Kesha, and their daughters, Adaya and Esmerie. Lewis is grateful for her fiancé, Desmond Hicks, for his unending support and love.

Lewis is known for her love of elephants. She believes that elephants depict a sign of strength, knowledge, endurance, and intelligence. In many ways, Lewis embodies those same characteristics. Her 41 years of service in the Virgin Islands to various causes that promote equality and justice, coupled with numerous awards and recognitions, are testimony to her valuable contributions to the community. In particular, she was inducted in the VI Women’s Hall of Fame, was named Activist for Justice by the St. Croix Avis, and received the Stanley and The Ten Sleepless Knights’ 7 Women 7 Purposes (Justice) award. She is proud to call St. Croix her home and Crucians her people. Clema Lewis is truly a better person because of the lives she has touched and changed on St. Croix. Our community is truly a better place because of her commitment and advocacy.