

logo not found or type unknown

# Denise George Encouraged to Run for Office; Plaskett Expresses Regret, Bryan Celebrates as USVI Reaches \$75M Settlement With JPMorgan

Government / **Published On September 27, 2023 06:07 AM /**

Janeke Simon **September 27, 2023**

Image not found or type unknown



**From left to right, Denise George, Jeffrey Epstein, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, and Governor Albert Bryan Jr.**

Amidst the recent [settlement of a \\$75 million lawsuit](#) between JPMorgan Chase and the U.S. Virgin Islands over alleged ties to Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking operations, two prominent figures, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett and former USVI Attorney General Denise George, are reflecting on their respective involvements with the now-deceased financier.

Epstein, who it is believed used his private island in the USVI as a base of operations for his criminal activities, donated directly to Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett's campaign at least

twice before his 2019 arrest, detention, and subsequent death. The \$30,000 donation was part of apparent efforts to cultivate influence in the territory, efforts led by former First Lady Cecile De Jongh, who worked in Epstein's local companies while her husband John de Jongh sat as governor.

Ms. Plaskett said recently that her campaign was aware that Epstein was "convicted of something in Florida," when the funds were donated, but was told that the check came from Epstein's legitimate business, and this is why the money was accepted.

In 2008, Epstein faced potential federal charges related to operating a sex trafficking ring that involved dozens of underage girls. However, in a controversial plea deal with federal prosecutors, Epstein avoided those federal charges and instead pleaded guilty in Florida to one count of solicitation of prostitution, and one count of solicitation of prostitution involving a minor.

These state charges were considerably less severe than the potential federal charges he was facing. As part of the plea deal, Epstein was sentenced to 18 months in jail, of which he served only 13 months. He was also granted work release, which allowed him to leave the jail for 12 hours a day, six days a week. The plea deal, and especially its leniency, was controversial and came under significant scrutiny, particularly when investigative journalism in subsequent years revealed the extent of Epstein's alleged crimes and the number of victims involved.

According to Ms. Plaskett, a major deciding factor for her acceptance of campaign funding is how that money was made. "If you are a drug dealer, and your income is from dealing drugs as an illegal activity, I don't want your money," was the example she provided to the Consortium during a recent [exclusive interview](#). The statements are similar to those made [four years ago](#) following Epstein's second arrest, when she announced that the money donated by Epstein would be given to "Virgin Islands organizations that work with women and children in the amount of his previous contributions."

In last week's interview, Ms. Plaskett declared that asking "big donors to make a contribution to the Democratic party" is something that all members of Congress do. However, she maintained that she has "never been asked by, or done anything for Jeffrey Epstein because he gave me a contribution or in general." According to Ms. Plaskett, on occasions when donors asked her for action in return, she would not accept the funds.

As for Epstein, "I regret having taken his contribution," Ms. Plaskett said.

As organizations in the USVI make use of redirected campaign funds from Ms. Plaskett, more financial support may soon be forthcoming. Of the \$75 million settlement announced yesterday between the V.I. government and JPMorgan, \$30 million will benefit USVI-based charities focused on human trafficking and victim support. The government and law enforcement will receive \$25 million to put toward combating human trafficking, and the rest of the settlement will cover legal fees to the tune of \$20 million. The V.I. Department of Justice previously settled a claim against [Epstein's estate](#) for \$105 million..

The settlement comes as vindication for Denise George, the territory's former attorney general who initiated the lawsuits against the sex offender's estate and subsequently the nation's largest bank. Ms. George was abruptly [fired](#) on New Year's Eve in 2022, days after the VIDOJ [filed suit](#) against JPMorgan. In a subsequent interview with Consortium journalists, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said that his former attorney-general had been terminated because of a [lack of communication](#).

However, Ms. George told a UK publication last week that the work conducted by the Office of the Attorney General is not subject to approval from anyone – not even the governor. She spoke exclusively to The Times, recounting stories from two victims who came to the territory to meet her after the lawsuit was filed. The recounting of their failed escape attempts from little St. James were so vividly descriptive of the island's terrain and features that Ms. George said she knew they were telling the truth.

She told The Times that as her investigating team worked to ferret out the facts from witnesses, she [heard whispers](#) which had begun to circulate locally that she should not be trying to tackle such a powerful target. However, she says that the evidence that was being uncovered was too stark to ignore. Her personal integrity, Ms. George said, would not allow her to look away.

Now that the lawsuit, which she pleaded with the governor to allow to continue, has been concluded with a multi-million dollar settlement in favor of the territory, the once-skeptical whispers have become congratulatory. Reluctant to disclose her plans for the immediate future, Ms. George told The Times that some have encouraged her to run for office.

Meanwhile, Governor Bryan celebrated the settlement, stating, "This settlement marks a significant step in achieving justice and bringing closure to this matter. Most importantly it guarantees JPMorgan will implement and establish anti-trafficking measures to meet their obligation to detect and report financial patterns associated with human trafficking.

"I want to express my gratitude to our legal team at the Virgin Islands Department of Justice and all those who have worked tirelessly to bring this lawsuit to a close. Their dedication to pursuing justice has been unwavering, and their efforts have resulted in this historic milestone."

Also commenting is sitting V.I. Attorney General Ariel Smith, who said, "Our Department of Justice tirelessly pursued this enforcement action to make it substantially harder for traffickers to finance their crimes in the future, and we are confident this settlement will help achieve that goal. We are proud to have stood alongside the survivors throughout this litigation, and this settlement reflects our continued commitment to them. With this constructive resolution of this groundbreaking litigation, we look forward to helping our community move forward and to building a new relationship with JPMorgan."