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# Restoration of Historic Monuments Underway at Charlotte Amalie's Educators Park

## Preserving the Past: Sculptor Ward Tomlinson Elicker Leads Restoration of Historic Bronze Monuments

Community Center / **Published On November 13, 2023 06:23 AM /**

Staff Consortium **November 13, 2023**

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**Tom Elicker works on the restoration of the sculpture of Antonio Jarvis at Educators Park. By. VIMCCC**

Last week marked the start of a major conservation project at Educators Park in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas: The bronze monuments of notable Virgin Islands educators and activists are getting a facelift – being cleaned, conserved and restored by renowned sculptor Ward Tomlinson Elicker, who has had a long history with public artwork in the territory.

Managed by the Virgin Islands Museum, Civic and Cultural Center Inc. (VIMCCC), the project was borne out of the concerns of Alda Monsanto, a local citizen distressed by the deteriorating state of the monuments representing prominent figures in VI society. She discussed those concerns with VIMCCC chair, former senator Myron Jackson, who then set in motion a fundraising campaign that generated over \$13,000 to facilitate Phase II of the restoration, through contributions from a number of local corporate and civic entities.

Mr. Elicker's involvement in the work being done, VIMCC says, underscores the project's commitment to quality and reverence for the local heritage.

The first phase of the project, which has already been completed, involved enhancing the area surrounding the park. The initiative was spearheaded by the owners of historic Joe's Tavern, adjacent to Educators Park, which speaks to the community-centered focus of the park's enhancement and restoration.

Educators Park itself, VIMCCC says, stands as a testament to the Virgin Islands' socio-political and cultural development. It was established through the efforts of a citizens' committee of educators, journalists, and activists led by Ariel Melchoir and Ruth Moolenaar. The park pays homage to luminaries like educator, author, and artist Jose Antonio Jarvis; educator and suffragist Edith Williams; and educator, journalist, and activist Rothschild Francis. The statues, crafted by José Buscaglia Guillermet, a renowned Puerto Rican sculptor, add significant cultural value to the site.

In acknowledging the community's role in this restoration, VIMCC extended its gratitude to Ms. Monsanto for her advocacy, the VIMCCC Board of Directors, the Rotary Club of St. Thomas, Merchants Commercial Bank for their financial support, and to Tom Elicker and Joel Asker for their expert conservation work. Additional thanks are due to Sean Krigger and the Office of Historic Preservation, Lab 4 Development, White Bay Group, Justin Wheatley and his crew for on-site assistance, and to Jim Crites and Val Collens of the Project Team. Lyle Batiste and all other contributors were also recognized for their support in this vital community endeavor.