

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Honors Martin Luther King Jr. with March and Rally, Highlighting His Global Legacy

Senator Novelle Francis, Jr. draws inspiration from Dr. King's legacy for ongoing community development

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Participants march in Frederiksted, St Croix on Monday, Jan. 15 in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. By. FACEBOOK

The Monday march and rally on St. Croix, celebrating the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr., attracted participants from diverse backgrounds. This wide-ranging involvement stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the civil rights leader in the United States and across the globe.

Starting at the Claude O. Markoe Elementary School, marchers made their way to General Buddhoe Park, where they and other spectators assembled to listen to some of Dr. King's most celebrated words, along with songs, poetry, and remarks from several speakers.

Senator Javan James said that as black leaders in the USVI, members of the V.I. Legislature honor the legacy of Dr. King by "advocating for equality in education, economic opportunities, and social justice." He noted Dr. King's visionary leadership, and his integral involvement in some of the country's most pivotal moments in the struggle for civil rights – the Montgomery bus boycott, the March on Washington, and the relentless advocacy that ultimately led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Mr. James exhorted Virgin Islanders to recommit themselves to the ideals of justice, equality and unity. Noting that he brought his two children with him to attend the event, the senator asked parents to help instill Dr. King's values in the younger generations. "Our children need guidance, and our children need leadership...if we continue to do those things, then we will see growth in our community."

Meanwhile, President of the 35th Legislature Senator Novelle Francis, Jr. told audience members that one quote in particular had struck a cord as he prepared for the day's celebrations. During his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in 1964, Dr. King noted that "we must never allow ourselves to become satisfied with unattained goals. We must always maintain a kind of divine discontent."

Mr. Francis said he interpreted that remark as a "need to be comfortable being uncomfortable." Referring to various developmental projects intended to propel the USVI forward, the lawmaker noted that "we're quick to throw up barriers and say that something won't work before we really give it an opportunity to try."

"The fear of failure has made us afraid of risk," he added.

Like Dr. King encouraged, Senator Francis told listeners not to "accept the status quo...keep pushing for progress and opportunities that benefit the entire community."

Observed annually on the third Monday in January, Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a federal holiday established by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. It was first observed in 1986, but it was not until the year 2000 that the holiday was officially recognized in all 50 states as well as the federal government.