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Plaskett Commemorates 1733 Slave Rebellion with Plaque Installation in St. John

Legacy of Liberation: The 1733 Slave Rebellion Gets Its Due Recognition

Community Center / **Published On March 04, 2024 05:26 PM /**

Staff Consortium **March 04, 2024**

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Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett, with support from the Virgin Islands National Park, hosted a ceremony on Sunday at Salt Pond in Coral Bay, St. John, to recognize the permanent installation of a plaque at the peak of the Ram Head trail commemorating the 1733 slave rebellion.

The ceremony featured a keynote by Dr. Hadiya Sewer from the St. John Collective, along with contributions from Senator-at-Large Angel Bolques, Jr., and Congresswoman Plaskett herself. Pastor Kendrick Glasgow, Jr., of the Cruz Bay Seventh-Day Adventist Church, delivered the benediction.

Among the attendees were St. John Administrator Shikima Jones-Sprauve, former St. John Administrator Leona Smith, students from the Eudora Kean High School's JROTC program, local residents, and visitors.

Ms. Plaskett highlighted the lack of public acknowledgment regarding the events of the 18th century on St. John. She emphasized the importance of the Ram Head plaque as a "proper and meaningful acknowledgment" of the historic rebellion against slavery, a pioneering event that occurred 115 years before the abolition of slavery in what is now the U.S. Virgin Islands, and 132 years before the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery across the United States.

The congresswoman also addressed the current trend of historical erasure in the country, stating, "Right now, there's such a drive to wipe out history in our country; without our history and that truth, our children can't be strong." She expressed gratitude towards individuals of all backgrounds who seek to acknowledge and be part of truth-telling regarding history.

Special thanks were extended to Republican Congressman Guy Reschenthaler of Pennsylvania's 14th District, who, after learning about the 1733 slave rebellion during a visit to St. John, pledged his support and co-sponsorship for the bill. Acknowledgments were also made to the Virgin Islands National Park Acting Superintendent Scott Simmons and his team, Senator Bolques, the office of Senator Marise James, Dr. Sewer, and Malachi Thomas for their contributions to the event.

Following the ceremony, attendees participated in a 2-mile hike on the Ram Head trail, culminating in the unveiling of the plaque. The event concluded with remarks from Virgin Islands National Park Visitor Service Program Manager Ahmed Toure, and a libation and Yoruba prayer offered by Malachi Thomas, honoring the sacrifices of the enslaved people on St. John during the 1733 rebellion.