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Governor Bryan Defends Record Amid Growing Concerns of Unlivable Conditions in the Virgin Islands

In a wide-ranging interview, Governor Bryan acknowledges economic hardships but points to achievements in infrastructure, job creation, and financial assistance programs as proof of progress

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Governor Albert Bryan

“I don’t get the credit for trying to fix the big problems,” said Governor Albert Bryan Jr. on Wednesday, as he defended his administration’s performance during his six years at the helm of the territory’s executive branch.

Speaking to Consortium founder and publisher Ernice Gilbert during an exclusive interview on August 28, Governor Bryan responded to prevailing sentiments among Virgin Islanders that life in

the territory was quickly becoming unlivable.?

“It is hard to get by, and I would never deny that,” Governor Bryan admitted. However, he pushed back on the idea that the grass was much greener elsewhere. “I don’t think that sentiment is any different on mainland USA,” he remarked, noting a recent news report where two white, college-educated people recounted how tough their lives had become in a financial sense. “One thing that I have to say is that it’s always been hard, you know?”

Mr. Bryan argued that now, despite the challenging economic environment, Virgin Islands had more access to jobs, financial opportunities, state assistance, free education both academic and vocational, “and a slew of programs to help people that weren’t there before.” He noted the advent of free college tuition, subsidies for first-time homebuyers, low unemployment and rising wages as positive economic indicators. “People talk about the budget deficit and everything, but the one thing they don’t mention is that during this administration we have paid people.”

Despite admitting that the oft-promised \$25 million in retroactive wages was largely [yet to be paid out](#), Governor Bryan nevertheless argued that “right from 1990 when that was due till now, there’s only two governors that have even attempted to pay it.” He pointed to the successful remittance of [long-overdue tax refunds](#) as proof that his administration was attempting to ensure that more money stayed in the hands of residents.

“When I got elected the first time, people were saying they wanted the road paved. We paved more roads than everything. They said they want the retirement system fixed, [we fixed that](#),” Governor Bryan pointed out. “They said they wanted the racetrack on St. Croix. They wanted Paul E. Joseph, we’re working on those things too,” he continued. “They wanted the economy to bounce back, we did,” Governor Bryan argued, defending his performance in office.?

He reminded residents that the Virgin Islands economy rises and falls with the fiscal health of the entire country. The current inflationary environment nationwide, therefore, is what is being keenly felt by Virgin Islanders here at home.