The Virgin Islands Consortium

Scotland: A Diamond in the Rough

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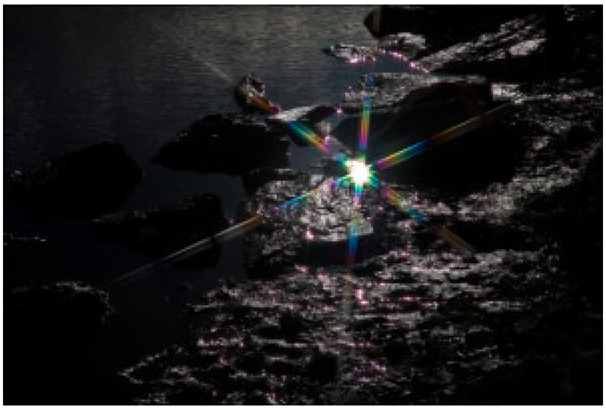
Ashley Scotland August 27, 2014

A Diamond in the Rough

 Diamond in the Rough

Someone recently made a statement to me that provoked a lot of thought and internal debate. The statement was “Anything thing made slow, is made well”. As a general rule, I try not to use indefinite pronouns that are absolute such as the one in the previous statement (anything), because once you disprove the statement once, the statement is totally disproved. So for the sake of this article I will amend the statement. “Things made slow, are made well”. A majority of the most highly valuable things in this world went through a time arduous, detailed process that required the patience of its maker and the awaiting consumer. Diamonds, rubies, emeralds, wine, petroleum, hand crafted objects, and luxury cars are just some of the items that have an increased value when they go through a time arduous and careful process. Values for the same product decrease as they go through more processed and accelerated processes. Even in food preparation, fast food places cannot charge the same prices as a sit down restaurant.

The process is what is valued almost as much as the actual object. We value things more because we appreciate the time, attention to detail, and the labor that goes into each individual object. We value those things because we know that the length and detail of the process will be a key ingredient in how long the object will last, how well it is made. We also know the person who put in the work will value it enough to be there to help repair it if something went wrong. The simple statement that anything made slow is made well can be applied to many different areas in our lives, whether it is our professional careers, our personal relationships or even in rebuilding a government. The process is where the value is located. The process is the greatest indicator of how long you will last at the destination.

The Rough

Currently, U.S. Virgin Islands is experiencing an economic recession, specifically on the island of St. Croix. Many factors attributed to the dramatic economic decline in the territory. Most notable are the 2008 banking collapse, the Hovensa Refinery shutdown, and the surging price of energy costs in the territory. These factors exacerbated an already bad situation. Most of the problems we currently face came to a head in the last four years, but the problem really started 20 plus years ago. Too often in the past, we have chosen to manage and govern these territories with a reactionary mentality. We wait for problems to arise, and then address them accordingly. When we address them, it is normally done with the pressures of either political interest or self interest groups. To be fair, most of the problems that we are currently experiencing did not happen as a result of the policies that were enacted by our most recent legislatures and Governor, such as the Government Employee Retirement Systems unfunded liability, or our dependence on fossil fuels specifically oil, or our deteriorating infrastructure (roads, sewers, power generating equipment). These problems happened as a result of decisions made by past Governor’s and older legislature policies. Those policies and decisions were probably made at the time with good intentions, but with very little foresight. At this critical time in our territory’s history our current and future elected officials have some tough choices to make that will impact and affect the next two generations.

The Cut

Because the economy of St. Croix bottomed out, we have the unique ability to shape and decide what the new economy of St. Croix is going to be. Decisions being made now cannot just be made based on what will help in the interim. We cannot and should not make rash decisions because of political or special interest pressures. Doing so will only lead us back to this point in later years. Roadmaps need to be laid that will help build the foundation for a stable economy with longevity and sustainability as its main objective.


Ashley Scotland

The responsibility for the next leader of the U.S. Virgin Islands, will not only be to come in and stop the bleeding, but to bring a vision of the U.S. Virgin Islands for the next 20 years, with plans on how they will start to work toward it. We are in a unique position, as we are both the owners and consumers of our government. It will be up to us to be patient as we go through this painstaking process, while at the same time making sure we are going through the process the right way, with the envisioned end product in mind. If our leaders and ourselves as a community go through this the right way, we will see increased value in the future, and the territory will be better for it. We have to make sure we shape it and cut it the right way. We have an opportunity to be that priceless jewel in the Caribbean, that everyone wants, but it will be up to us in how we handle the process.