

The Virgin Islands Consortium

SMH: When A Governor Makes A Mockery of Justice

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“An Open Letter to Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr.”

Mr. de Jongh:

Yesterday, after grappling with a flood of emotions that ranged from shock, to outrage, to bewilderment upon learning of your decision to pardon Sen. Alicia “Chucky” Hansen of past convictions of tax crimes, the final emotion I settled upon was disappointment. You know...that feeling that causes one’s heart to sink, one’s spirit to deflate, and one’s head to shake from side to side. Disappointment.

I, like many U.S. Virgin Islanders, am disappointed that the person the people has elected to the highest office of the land has managed to single-handedly make a mockery

of the U.S. Virgin Islands' justice system in the space of less than one week. To be clear, your pardoning of Sen. Hansen's crimes does not overrule the V.I. Supreme Court's decision last week that barred her from seeking re-election in the 31st Legislature. That ruling is still in place. In light of your careless decision, however, it is now left to the V. I. Board of Elections to decide if it will uphold the Court's ruling and keep Sen. Hansen's name off the November ballot. SIDE NOTE TO V. I. BOARD OF ELECTIONS: Please do



Embattled Senator Alicia 'Chucky' Hansen

Sir, your pardoning of Sen. Hansen has absolved her of her crimes of the failure to file taxes and says to Virgin Islanders—many of whom are children, impressionable teens, and young adults who are just finding their way in the world—that there are no consequences for bad behavior. That immoral and corrupt behavior is acceptable. That they can break the law, but if they are popular enough or have the biggest mouth in the room, they can get away with anything.

What you have done, Mr. de Jongh, is set a dangerous precedent that wrong doing is not wrong at all. This is irresponsible and shameful behavior coming from the CEO of the Virgin Islands. At such a pivotal moment in the Territory's history, particularly in St. Croix, where unemployment is at an all-time high and crime seems to be spiraling out of control, you have chosen to look the other way, abandoning the people you represent, and leaving Virgin Islanders to fend for themselves. This was your moment to show from which cloth you are cut—is it the fabric of integrity or that of insanity? After your move little doubt in the minds of the good people of these Virgin



St. Croix Educational Complex students

The children are watching, Mr. de Jongh, and your decision to pardon Mrs. Hansen has confused them. You recently completed your annual Back-to-School tour of the Territory's public schools and you encouraged students to do well and to do what's right. How can you then go back and look those youngsters in the eye and justify your pardoning of Sen. Hansen as something that was right to do?

Your argument has been that Mrs. Hansen's supporters have twice elected her to the Senate, even after being aware of her crimes. While this is true, I think many more responsible and informed citizens, like me, were rooting for you to draw the line in the sand and say, 'Mrs. Hansen, the buck stops here.' Unfortunately, with all the sand that had been washed ashore in this case, you still chose not to roll up your pant legs, stoop down, and draw a line in it. You, effectively, have perpetuated the often dysfunctional and widely dishonest brand of politics known to plague the U.S. Virgin Islands.

I am ashamed to call you Governor. Your tenure is up, but what a way to go down in history as the governor that pardoned a senator of crimes that hurt the Virgin Islands' coffers, most notably at a time when every little penny counts. We all have our part to play in paying our dues. No one gets a free lunch—not even a veteran senator as Mrs. Hansen.

I think this passage from Scripture sums it up: *Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.* - Isaiah 1:17

Mr. de Jongh, you would do well to open The Good Book sometime.

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