

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Wait, Is It Time For A 21st Century 'Fiyah Bun' In The Territory?

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Cynthia Graham **October 03, 2014**



First off, put down the box of matches and slowly step away from the gallon of gasoline. Lord, have mercy.

This post is not about burning down the place...at least not in the same way our brave Crucian ancestors took action against their Danish oppressors.

For the record, here's a little history on that...

Fireburn 1878

Just three days ago, October 1, marked the 136th anniversary of the historic 1878 'Fireburn' labor revolt in Frederiksted, St. Croix, which saw three women, traditionally known as 'queens'—Queen Mary Thomas, Queen Mathilda Macbean and Axeline "Queen Agnes" Salomon—organizing a significant uprising against the oppressive conditions under which they worked for their white Danish employers.

Under the leadership of the three heroines, much of St. Croix's west end was torched in a bloody captured and imprisoned in of black workers on St. Croix.



Reenactment of the 1878

"Fireburn"

Now, an entire century, three decades and six years later, many things have certainly changed on St. Croix, but, it seems, many have remained the same. Back then, Queen Mary and 'dem--all free blacks--said enough is enough 30 years after slavery had ended on the island, yet they continued to toil under harsh, slave-like conditions for very little pay.

No one's working on a sugarcane plantation these days, but when I observe the oppressive conditions under which we live, work and play, particularly on St. Croix, I wonder how much progress we've really made since the days of Mary, Mathilda and Agnes.

Here are some of what I've observed as modern-day oppression; and it's happening on all three of our beautiful islands, in one way or another:

- [Government fraud and corruption](#)
- Elections fraud and corruption
- Incompetent and dishonest elected officials
- [Miscarriages of justice](#)
- [Broken healthcare system and substandard hospital facilities](#)
- Gas gone wild
- [Carjackings, bank robberies and homicides](#)
- Unknown chemical or propane-like odors wafting through our local schools
- Black fungus growing in and around homes

- Sky-high prices and low wages
- [Unemployment due to little or no jobs available](#)
- Undrivable roads due to crater-sized potholes
- High property taxes
- [WAPA given authority to bill residents for the usage of public streetlights](#) (Lawd, Lawd, Lawd)
- [\\$500,000 in public funds used to install security upgrades to the governor's private home](#) (Lawd, Lawd, Lawd)
- [Governor seeking to secure pension payments \(with taxpayers' dollars\) for his spouse upon his death](#)
- [FILL IN THE BLANK]

Fireburn 2014

I began this piece by stating that no one is here to burn down Frederiksted, Charlotte Amalie or Cruz Bay, right?

But, let me introduce you to what a 21st Century Fireburn looks like:

- Sign online petitions to stop government agencies from wrongfully billing residents. See [here](#) and [here](#).
- Call or write your senators and voice your concerns on any and everything. See [here](#).
- Tweet, text, Facebook, Insta, YouTube--use all forms of social media to let the world know about injustices.
- Hold elected officials, CEOs and all those in authority accountable for the things they say and do.
- Set aside divisions along racial lines, economic status, religious affiliation, etc. That's so 2013.
- Seek liberty and justice for all.
- Speak up about crime. This no-snitching culture is for the birds.
- Ensure our children receive the best education in order to have the best chances in life.
- Register to vote (the last day for the 2014 election cycle is Oct. 5).
- Stop voting for candidates because of name recognition, family affiliation, fish fry and jam...let me say that again
- Stop voting for candidates because of name recognition, family affiliation, fish fry and jam.
- Stop voting for candidates with big mouths and little humility.
- Vote for candidates that have integrity, honesty and compassion for the people; you'll know them by their fruit.
- Awaken out of our slumber, complacency and apathy.
- Unite, hold demonstrations, march on Government House...you know, take it to the streets!
- Don't take 'no' for an answer; keep asking questions and knocking on doors until you find your 'yes' person.
- Show love, kindness and compassion.
- Pray, give thanks and move forward in faith and confidence.

From what we've been seeing on our Facebook page and on our website over the last few days, it seems that Fireburn 2014 could well be showing its first few glowing embers.

Have we forgotten that 'We the People' have the power to put folks into office and the very same power to take them out?

If we keep doing what we've always done, we'll keep getting the same results we've always gotten (see modern-day oppression above).

Let's set this place--this Territory we so love--ablaze by raising our voices and demanding better of ourselves and of those that lead us.

To that end, I have to ask...where all my Queens (and Kings) at?

#Fireburn2014

#LettheblazebeginSTXSTTSTJ

Featured photo: "The Three Queens" -- St. Thomas, USVI

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