

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Native Dr. Albert Titus Takes JFL To Court, Has Until Nov. 12 To Save His Career (Part 1)

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There's a doctor named Albert A. Titus that many Virgin Islanders know because he has treated a lot of them. Over 1,500 to exact, at his private practice, and even more when he held a Special Unrestricted License, awarded him by Juan F. Luis Hospital, that gave him the authority to practice medicine in both private and public facilities in the Virgin Islands. But something unusual happened to Dr. Titus, a native son, who spent years honing his skills in the United States. Now, he is in court fighting to save his career.

Dissolving the relationship with Seaver was "amicable for me," Dr. Titus said, "but not for Dr. Seaver. [Seaver] was upset because he told me that he was going to do everything in his power to destroy my practice."

A top academic student during his childhood on St. Croix, Titus would eventually receive a scholarship that paid for four years of college, including an additional perk of two annual trips back to St. Croix. When Titus moved to the U.S. mainland after graduating from the St. Croix Central High School in 1982 to pursue a career in medicine, he landed first at the University of Miami and graduated at the top of his class with a bachelor of science degree in chemistry and a minor in math. From there, Titus moved to the University of South Carolina to attend medical school, and as it was in his early days, he again scored a scholarship after his first year there; however, instead of staying in South Carolina, he returned to the University of Miami and enrolled in the Miller School of Medicine to complete his medical training.

Again, Titus graduated at the top of his class in 1994, propelling him into the most important season of his life before becoming a doctor: residency.

"I knew I wanted to be a doctor at the age of 6," Titus testified on Wednesday at the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands on St. Croix, where he has filed suit to have his licence, which was revoked by Juan Luis Hospital in 2013, reinstated. The young Titus had witnessed a doctor tending to his sister's wounds after she had gotten into an accident and later asked his mother how could he help his sister. His mother told him he would have to become a doctor, and told the young boy what it would take to become one: study hard, top grades, discipline and more. For Titus, his destiny was sealed.

It was 'home', however, that would threaten to destroy Titus' career forever, one which he worked so hard to attain.

At residency, Titus did not disappoint. He was in the top 4 of the 1,000 who got accepted, and after staying in residency for 6 years, Titus graduated with the highest honor: Chief Resident of the year 1999-2000; Resident of the Year; and Best Surgeon across all practices. Titus had performed over 1,500 surgical cases while at residency, and in his career before he moved to St. Croix, over 6,000 cases. "I felt like I had enough experience under my belt to come home," Titus said in court on Wednesday while testifying under oath, recounting the decision he made to move back to his homeland.

He had ventured back to the territory in 2010 on vacation, where he met with childhood friend and medical school classmate, Dr. Kendall Griffith, current CEO of the Juan F. Luis Hospital. Titus' story on St. Croix would soon be shaped by decisions he made with encouragement from Griffith, the most significant being Titus' decision to start a private practice with Dr. Christopher Seaver.

Titus' move to St. Croix, which he called "home," would become permanent in that same year. St. Croix had gained its son back, but Florida would miss him, as the doctor was well-respected in the US, and had membership in many prestigious medical groups and associations that only a selection of doctors have the privilege of joining.

As part of his application to the Luis Hospital, a reference letter was required. The same was written by Dr. Todd Vedder, chief pediatrician at Naples Community Hospital in Florida, who lamented Titus' move to St. Croix, but was happy for the children he would care for in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



Dr. Albert Titus, now in the fight of his life to

regain his license, which was revoked by Juan F. Luis Hospital on St. Croix.

And with good reason. When Titus became a certified doctor after completing his residency in 2001, the accomplishments kept rolling in. Titus became Board Certified -- an accomplishment only achieved when one has attained the highest level of judgement in medical practice. He then became a part of the American Board of Surgery and later, when the University of Florida opened a Trauma Center, Dr. Titus was chosen as the Chief Surgeon of [Holmes Regional Medical Center](#), with over 108 surgeons under his supervision. Titus could have stayed in Florida and enrich the lives of the people there, but with home on his mind and gratitude in his heart, he returned to St. Croix with the intent of retiring on the island.

It was 'home', however, that would threaten to destroy Titus' career forever, one which he worked so hard to attain.

Titus became a doctor at Juan Luis Hospital in 2010, and having received an Unrestricted Special License in the territory, he could now operate as a private and public physician, something most doctors do.

But, Dr. Titus did not open his private practice by himself; instead, he joined forces with Dr. Seaver, who also worked at Juan Luis. Titus testified that he had done most of the administrative work to set up the practice; however, after almost a year and a half as partners, problems arose and the two men decided to part ways. The partnership started in August 2010 and dissolved in December 2011.

Dissolving the relationship with Seaver was "amicable for me," Dr. Titus testified, "but not for Dr. Seaver. [Seaver] was upset because he told me that he was going to do everything in his power to destroy my practice."

In addition to operating a private practice, Titus was also Interim Chief of Emergency at Juan Luis, and he then became Interim Chief of Service. Soon after, the doctor became Permanent Chief of Service, which forced him to forego his position of Interim Chief of Emergency because the responsibilities were overwhelming.

According to Titus, Seaver made his threat of destroying him real when Seaver began speaking disparagingly about Titus, writing degrading notes on boards, and saying unflattering things about Titus to the nursing staff, medical students and other hospital staff. The situation became so unbearable that Titus decided to quit his position at the hospital as Chief of Service; however, the position was given to Dr. Seaver, amplifying an already intolerable set of circumstances for him, Dr. Titus said.

"I sent a letter to the Chair of the Hospital Board," Titus said, stating that "I had a problem with who was now my boss." Titus said it was his only recourse, although he wasn't sure how much it would help.

What Titus described as Seaver's journey to destroy him continued, with Seaver threatening to call the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to alert them of all the ills at the hospital. At the time, the hospital was under a Systems Improvement Agreement with CMS, so calling the federal agency would only complicate an already bad situation at Juan Luis. It is unclear why Dr. Seaver threatened to call CMS as it relates to Dr. Titus' employment.

This brings to an end the first part of VI Consortium's series about the circumstances that led to the revoking of Dr. Titus' medical license. He is now in court with the Juan F. Luis Hospital, fighting to regain his license, and quite frankly, his life. The hearing continues on Thursday at the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands.