

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion: Third-World Country Consciousness As It Affects The Lives of USVI Retirees

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Are you planning a retirement in the U.S. Virgin Islands? Were you a "lucky" party to secure one of those coveted, glorious, good government jobs that promises a "pie in the sky, milk and honey" compensation and benefits package? Are you employed with the Government of the Virgin Islands and plan to secure your post-retirement "gold pot" investment based on your employment workforce contributions?

Are you secure in the knowledge that your retirement annuity is intact -- available to tap when it comes time to collect? When years ago the esteemed, and now deceased Antoine L. Joseph, a District Court judge, having one of the highest offices in the land is not respected, and he fails to get paid for time served, what leveraging power do I, as a

"common citizen," possess in securing my due?

December 31, 2014 marks over sixteen months that not one written formal word from GERS or the Government of the Virgin Islands Department of Education has been forwarded to me regarding the status of my retirement annuity and when payment would be forthcoming -- a business as usual practice I have come to find out.

Joseph and five other presiding judges had to execute a judgement against GERS to mandate their pay. When has it become fashionable to have to bring legal action against a government or semi-autonomous government body to perform a legal requirement? What type of judicial, executive and legislative jurisprudence exist in this society that allows disorderly malaise and permit in a "civil" society the type of barbaric conduct that occurs here in our Virgin Islands "home"?

What type of forces are in operation that allow the appointed public servants to knowingly let co-citizens suffer ill will behind incompetence, unprofessional conduct, and willful, immoral, and unlawful acts? As a more than thirty-year educator, (twenty-three years in the Dept. of Education) *bahn-here*, law-abiding, tax-paying citizen, having lived and served no where else but the Virgin Islands, my home has been auctioned off on December 19, 2014. Let the record show that I have lived in this home, since 1991, that served the community -- piloting projects, hosting self-help programs for over twenty years supported mostly by personal earnings, thousands of volunteer hours, and members'/supporters' charitable giving.

Even though we approached the lender (Scotiabank) about forgiveness for years of community service, it was not honored (inaccurate reporting corrected). Let the record show and bank statements reflect that prior to my retirement, August 31, 2013, payment on this property where I reside was current and timely. December 31, 2014 marks over sixteen months that not one written formal word from GERS or the Government of the Virgin Islands Department of Education has been forwarded to me regarding the status of my retirement annuity and when payment would be forthcoming -- a business-as-usual practice I have come to find out. The government only provided a retirement NOPA, a letter that indicates I am not on payroll, and a letter to Scotiabank that could not help in taking my home off the auction block (that letter still could not provide an actual date of pay).

What law in the land allows the government to "steal" people's money and then hold them accountable for replacement? Which unconscionable senator could be allowed to create a law that makes the people responsible to pay the government portion of their annuity after paying in their own? Let the record show that I do not consent to this unlawful act; that I resist all its intentions.

Hundreds of thousands march in Washington and throughout the United States to protest a menacing practice of racially motivated crimes against humanity. It is said remaining silent signifies "consent." If you, as a Virgin Islander, do not attach importance to your retirement issue or any you deem important, for that matter, through meaningful public protest, no one either will give it importance.

Wake up people!

Of even greater concern is the projection of the October 1, 2013 Actuarial Valuation and review report prepared by GERS system actuary, Segal Consulting, projecting that the retirement system will become insolvent or unable to make its required payments to retirees in the year 2025 if "there is an increase in the unfunded system obligations, which means that the funded ratio—the amount of funding in hand compared to the amount needed—has continued to decline from 45.7% to 40.2%."

Can we afford to remain complacent, quiet-mouthed and disinterested? Much of this is perpetuated by fraud, incompetence, mismanagement, and plain old, 'you don't care, so we don't care'.

We are actually the people of the first world because people of color around the world are civilized. We have become uncivilized through indoctrination, imitation, integration, intimidation, fear and, of course, consent -- our own.

Let not the sun set on your knowledge of these things and not act. Execute your first amendment, natural and God-given rights. Become proactive, positive and non-consenting. Some say 'today for me, tomorrow for you'.

Submitted by:

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The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author, and may not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the staff and management of the VI Consortium.