

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Downtown Christiansted, Canegata Ballpark Come Alive For Dominican Republic Independence Celebration

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For the sixth year, revelers and residents on St. Croix came out on Sunday afternoon for a celebration marking the Dominican Republic's independence from various nations, including the United States, [which had control of the Caribbean island from 1916 to 1924](#), with a parade that featured bands, deejays, bikes, Wrangler Jeeps with oversized tires, and much more.

The event kicked off at Basin Triangle and wove through downtown Christiansted, as participants danced and waved to on-lookers on either side of main street.

The lively procession made its way to the Canegata Ballpark in Gallows Bay, where vendors lined both sides of the field, serving everything from traditional chicken legs and johnny cakes, to more unique Latin offerings that many locals have come to love.

VI Consortium caught up with Senator Sammuel Sanes, who expressed his love of attending community events.

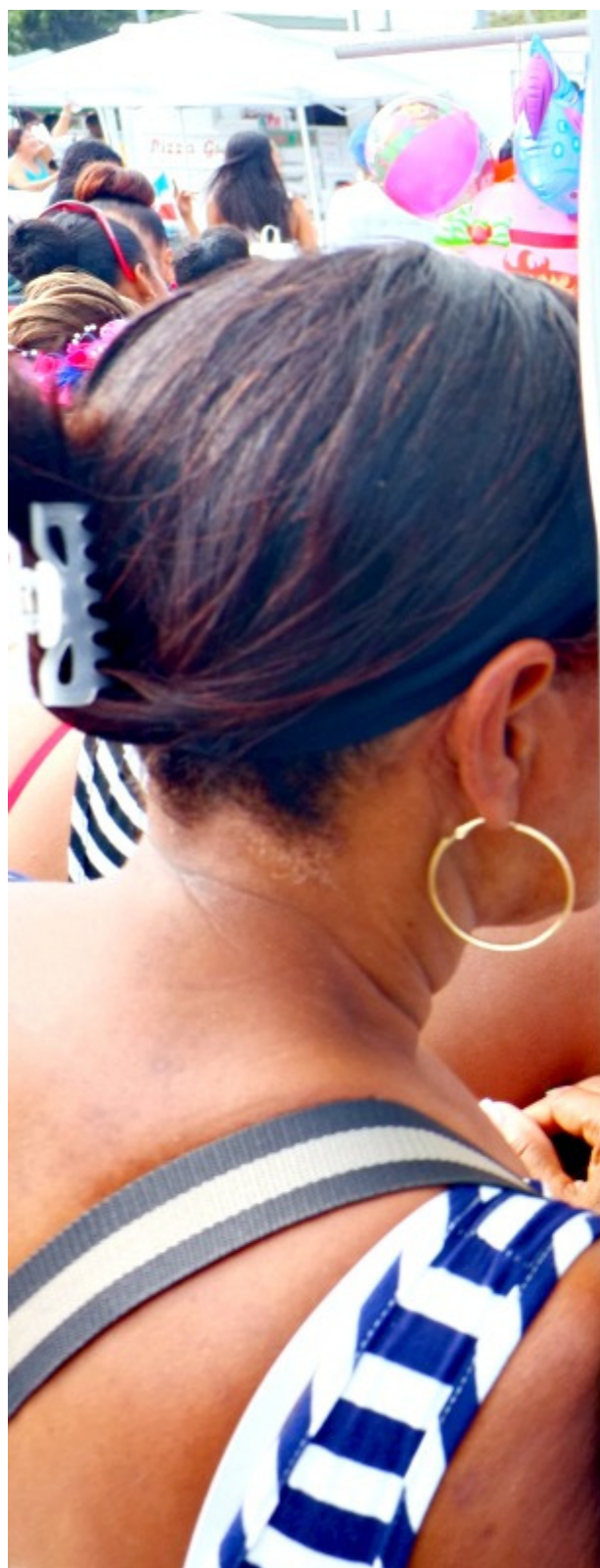
"As a public official, you have to show support. I try to get to as many events as possible -- and not just the events to have fun, but also school events, political events, and the other events taking place here on the island," he said, adding that, "It's good to see all the different cultures coming together as one and I really enjoy it."





Local queens on stage at the Canegata Ballpark enjoying the activities











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control knob and light. It will take 3 seconds.

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"The parade is great," he went continued, "I like to see the different organizations participating, and it's all about family and friends getting together to have a good time."

"Every year we're getting more and more people from the Dominican Republic, and we know that there's about 10,000 of us in the Virgin Islands, so we decided to celebrate our culture so we could get our people together," said event organizer, Ovelto O'Neal.

In relation to attendance, O'Neal said this year's showing is smaller compared to past celebrations, noting that people have left the island since the economic downturn.

"This has been a slow year," O'Neal said. "A lot of people have left the island so this year over 10,000 people here."



Local queens on stage at the

Canegata Ballpark enjoying the festivities

He highlighted the fact that the event brings out the diverse cultures represented on St. Croix.

"You have Crucians, Puerto Ricans, people from the Caribbean islands and the Dominican people, they come out here and have good celebration," O'Neal said.

He went on to explain that the celebration has more to do than only commemorating the Dominican Republic's independence; it is also about showing gratitude.

"This is something different. We appreciate the people of the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean who went to live in the Dominican Republic in the early 1990s," O'Neal said.

"So now, we the children have come this way, so we've decided to let them know that we appreciate what they have done for us in the Dominican Republic, and the Crucians appreciate what we did for them in the early 1990s." [\[The Dominican Republic History\]](#).

The festivities ran until midnight, and included bands from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, as well as local acts. Queens from various local pageants could be seen sitting graciously on stage at Categata Ballpark enjoying the day's events.

Smaller crowds or not, the Dominican Republic's 2015 independence celebration on St. Croix proved a success, and it speaks to how strong the group's presence and influence has grown in the Virgin Islands, becoming a formidable force both economically and politically.

The Dominican Independence War gave the Dominican Republic autonomy from Haiti on February 27, 1844. Before the war, the island of Hispaniola had been united under the Haitian government for a period of 22 years when the newly independent nation merged with Haiti in 1822. This year, the nation celebrates its 172nd year of independence.