

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Op-Ed: Governor, Give Young People A Chance In Your Administration

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Governor Kenneth Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter stand with the 11 rejected cabinet members at Government House In St. Thomas. Mapp reappointed the members today.

To all of my generation here on our beloved Islands, congratulations, we have now gotten control of the government. We are now the vast majority of the commissioners, directors, etc.

It is unusual for a community to have such faith in one generation that it takes almost no notice of the younger generation for leadership. I guess we are so experienced and knowledgeable that no one else can compete with us. I will look in the mirror tomorrow to see if this is true, but for now, with the good people that have been selected to run the islands, I feel proud of my peers.

Truthfully, I do not mean this as any insult, but only a reality check. In most societies, at this stage of life, we would be put on an ice flow and sent out to sea. However, here in our paradise we still get ancestor worship. Lucky us.

Dear reader, I am friends with many of these fine people and know they will and are still capable of doing a good and fair job with their new appointments. I sincerely wish them all the best. Their success is our success. Many of them have vast knowledge of the world we live in, having lived in it for so long.

But I must say that I prefer the company and thinking of younger people. I naturally spend much of my free time with 'boys my own age', but find the intellectual capacity of the younger generation fascinating. They, when not glued to their 'tablets' or iPhones, can, many of them, have a thoughtful conversation. If they're not recognized and put to good use, they will leave the islands.

I do not wish for the territory to become an 'old age home'. Who will be left to push the wheel chairs? Ok, I'm exaggerating a bit, but I'm not completely off the mark.

I say all of this to make a point: getting the next generation ready to govern is very important for any community and we are not doing it. Here is what I suggest: There are many boards and commissions with vacancies. These boards and commissions are the perfect training grounds for this next generation to get their feet wet on how it all works.

I began my political career in my twenties on a planning commission and ultimately went on to being elected deputy mayor of a fairly large city while in my thirties. Oh, by the way, I was not paid a cent for all the many years in office. In fact, I never received gas money, to say nothing of a big salary and government car, etc. We do things differently here, I know, and so be it. My point is we need to open these boards and commissions to the younger members of our community while filling them with the number of people they require by law.

To the powers that be: open up the government to the next generation. Let the sun shine into the inner workings of the government and let new voices speak. We 'old' voices have been heard long enough.

Feature Image: Members of Governor Kenneth Mapp's cabinet who were recently renominated after failing senate approval.

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