

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Thoughts On An Extraordinary Week: Do We Dare Hope?

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I find myself experiencing a renewed sense of hope for our nation these days.

After years of gridlock and partisan obstructionism, President Barack Obama's legacy is finally being sealed. I am not only happy for him but for our country.

First, although there remains work to be done with the affordable Care Act (ACA) on expanding the Territories' participation as well as the full adoption of Medicaid expansion by the remaining states, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decision upholding the subsidies in the state exchanges was a great victory. And I am humbled but euphoric when I think that I was a part of creating this landmark law that will go down

in history as the greatest advancement for the well-being of the people of the United States since the creation of Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and the Civil Rights Laws. We never viewed the ACA as perfect or the endgame in providing universal access to health care, and neither were those other major laws when first passed. They were all perfected over the years and I am hopeful that the ACA/Obamacare will be too.

And then, I took a lot of heat over my position on same-sex marriage last year, but as I said then, it comes down to what is a sacred principle in our Constitution - "equal protection under the law". Given separation of church and state, no church should/would be forced to do anything that is against their religious beliefs, but we should all celebrate when any form of discrimination is struck down, especially given our history as African descendants in the "new world", as Americans who rely on the promise of our constitution of everyone's inalienable right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", and as Godfearing people who believe that we are all His children.

As an American citizen residing in one of the U.S.'s offshore possessions, until and unless a more independent status is chosen, I hope and will work for the day when we too achieve all of the rights and privileges under our nation's Constitution.

But my greatest hope comes from this time of unprecedented potential to turn the page on our nation's racist past and move to the reconciliation that can heal our country - to realize the glimpse that the Mother Emanuel Congregation has given us of the "more perfect union." I don't expect those who harbor long-held racist ideologies and prejudices to change overnight, but I want to believe - I so want to believe- that the same way persistent non-violence overcame Jim Crow, a pervasive and persistent spirit of forgiveness, emanating from the love for our fellow man as we are commanded, will overcome even the worst of our historical memory and the deepest of our pain. I know it can be that powerful force that can finally move the mountains of hate that have divided us. And it is up to the "good people" not to remain silent and on the sidelines but to practice and live forgiveness and love of neighbor..

I am still waiting to have the same renewed hope, though, that we in the Virgin Islands will abandon our differences - real and created - to heal our territory too, and begin to work earnestly together for its economic, social and political revival. That it will soon come is my prayer!

Submitted by:

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*Feature Image: Former Delegate to Congress Donna Christensen.*