

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sunday Edition: U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Ken Mapp Criticized For Traveling Too Much

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Naysayers charge that U.S. Virgin Islands Governor Ken Mapp travels too much.

With the growing threat of the Mapp-Potter administration being a one-term experience due to what is alleged by legislators and critics to be excessive government spending and unnecessary travel, heavy is the behind-the-scenes plotting and backroom deals being made by a few senators in the 31st Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and opponents in the territory looking to replace the Mapp-Potter team themselves in 2018.

On the cusp of eight months into the new administration, it's natural to ask, 'How much are you here? How much are you actually engaged in the plans you told us about during

your 2014 gubernatorial campaign?'

A few senators in the 31st Legislature are so well-greased into the 2018 campaign and election process, legislation which they were hired to construct, is an afterthought, yet they have held meetings and interviews with and are vetting lieutenant governor candidates, developing finance plans, and short-listing campaign staff.

No foul. No harm.

Those among us versed in political management, campaigns and elections know that the 2018 gubernatorial campaign started on Tuesday, November 18, 2014, when Governor Ken Mapp and Lieutenant Governor Osbert Potter won the election.

Anyone serious about winning in 2018 has already started to build their war chest, organize a committed base of volunteers, loyalists, champions, and fundraisers who truly support their candidacy—if these candidates hadn't already started to build their campaign infrastructure, well before November 18, 2014.

However, there are activities much more sinister and considerations much more baleful than meets the eye happening behind the scenes in the 31st Legislature. The old adage, 'There is more in the mortar than the pestle' comes to mind.

Wearing my political management hat and offering up pro bono advice, I share this with those engaged in sinister activities and dirty politics: Always remember, that in the small and uber connected U.S. Virgin Islands community, one can't flatulate in Christiansted without Frederiksted hearing about it.

Don't put the cart before the horse and don't muddy the shed. Irrespective of a campaign's size or phase, like a brick house, the foundation and infrastructure should be solid and put in place methodically before a candidate picks out the drapes for Government House.

The bedrock of campaigns and elections, starts with the best quality cement and underpinnings that include organizational structure, adhered to processes and a well-oiled and maintained budget. It is no different in the 31st Legislature. Prove yourself in the Legislative Branch. Forget the drapes at Government House for now. Concentrate on legislation and a foundation at the Earle B. Otter and Frederiksted Legislative Halls, made of bricks and mortar, and keep top of mind that in 21st century campaigns and elections, nobody uses drapes anymore anyways.

Now back to critics who question whether Governor Mapp's travel is necessary. To analyze the pros and cons of this question fairly and effectively, let's take Ken Mapp out of the equation. Those among us who are excited about the second and third place winners of the 2014 U.S. Virgin Islands gubernatorial election becoming governor in the future, can substitute the names of Donna Christensen and Adlah "Foncie" Donastorg with Ken Mapp in this equation.

Be it, Ken Mapp, Donna Christensen, or Adlah "Foncie" Donastorg, any elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands is up against a serious agenda, hard work, and a series of Supreme Court decisions that by any estimation is bad law, frankly racist, and jeopardizes the future and overall growth of the islands. Here's the rub.

In the 1901 Insular Cases, the Supreme Court ruled that the United States colonies: The United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands, considered official “possessions” were territories that belonged to the United States, but weren’t actually part of the United States. As such, the Supreme Court ruled the “possessions” were “inhabited by savage and alien races.”

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The Supreme Court ruled that these “savage” and “alien races” differed in religion, customs, laws, methods of taxation, and modes of thought.

To be crystal clear, and specific to the U.S. Virgin Islands, the aforementioned was another way of the Supreme Court saying, St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John—the U.S. Virgin Islands collectively, is inhabited by monkeys in the wild who jump from tree-to-tree and are proud to say, “That’s my cousin on both sides,” when to Henry Billings Brown, the judge who led the decision in the 1901 Insular Cases — the physiological and biological machinations of cousin marriages and cousins on both sides was a leading cause of inherited diseases, birth defects, and learning disabilities.

As far as Brown was concerned, his “alien races” ruling worked out judiciously. As the popular saying in the Caribbean notes, “Not every skin teeth is a smile.”

Don’t be misguided and altogether duped. The thought pattern that U.S. Virgin Islanders are monkeys who are not able to process Anglo-Saxon principles is a colonial and racist mindset.

In sum and largely because of their race and ethnicity, Brown and the Supreme Court referred to U.S. Virgin Islanders as “savage and alien races.” Much of that colonialism and racist residue is left in 2015, and because of it, U.S. Virgin Islanders are still considered ‘persona non grata’ and treated like third class citizens on a national scale.

U.S. Virgin Islanders are citizens but cannot vote in presidential elections. The U.S. Virgin Islands delegate to Congress has a voice but no vote. The governor, who is elected locally every four years, can send citizens to war to serve on the front lines as human capital in the United States military, but the governor, delegate, and veterans can’t vote for president.

There is a lot of work to do, and every time Governor Mapp travels and meets with global business and political leaders, he chips away at age-old stereotypes and buries colonial vestiges. So much so, the very leaders he travels to meet and negotiate with on behalf of the territory, are left questioning whether the governor who impressed them as an equal is really from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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The sitting governor is Ken Mapp, but if it were Donna Christensen or Adlah “Foncie” Donastorg, I would say the same. The governor is not on vacation when he/she is traveling. The governor is negotiating with global business and political leaders to end the economic morass and fiscal uncertainty in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

To be frank, the governor has bigger fish to fry than consuming his/herself in the melee and harangue of legislators and critics about official travel.

Don't we get it? There are millions of people who think the U.S. Virgin Islands is only worthy of a good lay during Spring break, St. Thomas Carnival, and the Crucian Christmas Carnival. There are millions more like Justice Brown who really believe our people are “alien races.” Some of those people who consider our people, “alien races,” and monkeys, and deem our islands only worthy of a good lay during their snowbird season, have voting rights that U.S. Virgin Islander's don't have.

Governor Mapp or any elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, working on these problems and issues, solely on their smartphone or desktop computer from their office in the territory just doesn't cut it. That approach in the global economy, doesn't pass muster, and quite frankly is crash and burn.

Business travel is a must to make big deals, and yes, inviting these leaders to America's Paradise makes absolute sense too, so striking a balance between both is key. Under that construct, an official governor's residence to entertain these leaders would certainly enhance the U.S. Virgin Islands' Brand.

The problems of equal voting rights, economic development, clean and affordable energy, equal pay for equal work, healthcare, and education, require a get off the rock, get off your derriere, stop spinning top in mud, and take the bull by the horn resolve on behalf of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Soon enough, it will be crystal clear that if as a result of Governor Ken Mapp's official travel, business leaders on the mainland, in the Caribbean, and across the globe, help grow the economy and stimulate business in the private sector on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John to the tune of 1000 jobs in four years for the U.S. Virgin Islands, under the governor's innovative jobs plan outlined during his 2014 campaign, he will be re-elected—or not. Time will tell.