

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Thank You For Allowing Me To Serve You

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Dear Editor,

As children growing up in St. Croix we were always told the same thing. During every motivational speech, every graduation and every important milestone, we were all told the same thing. At my sixth grade graduation from Ricardo Richards Elementary School, Senator Sydney Lee spoke to us kids. We all listened with very focused and intent eyes. This child, now an adult, soaked in his every word. The senator said, "You are the future of the Virgin Islands. Do your best. Get good grades. Get a good education. Then bring it back home to improve your island."

I remember at an even younger age, during fourth grade, Governor Cyril King told us the very same thing. Delta Dorsch, at my sister's graduation from Central High School (1979), stood in the rain under an umbrella in the parking lot of the school and said, "You are the future. Go to college get an education and bring it back home." At my Central High graduation, Governor Juan Luis said the same thing.

I believed it. I believed every word that the prior leaders and legends of our territory told us. I believed it with every fiber of my being and as a child I committed myself to live it.

As a result, I left St. Croix to get my education with the sole intent of returning home to improve the healthcare system of our home. Every bit of knowledge I received, every bit of education and experience was with the sole intent of returning to St. Croix to improve the lives of the people who raised us, taught us, loved us, and encouraged us. Upon completing my studies in 2001, the offers started to come. I refused those offers, because I would not be fulfilled if I did not return home to make a difference.

I returned home and hit the ground running. Finally, with my studies complete, it was time to get to work. We pulled a team together and created the interventional cardiology program. The great work of that team led to the creation of the VICC.

When asked to serve again as interim CEO, I again stepped up to the plate against the advice of those who loved me. They were concerned that I would be blamed and attacked for the state of the hospital. Of course I would. Once I accepted the challenge, I had to own the problems. But fixing St. Croix's only hospital, would be beneficial to all Crucians, Virgin Islanders, and visitors to our shores. It was necessary. There needed to be drastic change.

With great change comes great controversy and challenges; and, the weapons in this battle are not guns and knives, but words and actions; words that are sometimes filled with untruths, but feel equally as damaging as the bullet, and have much further reaching, and longer lasting collateral damage.

However, in the heat of the battle, a man of character does not run away but stays and fights, and learns to navigate the challenges before him, at all times staying on mission and maintaining the vision of victory. Martin Luther King said "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

JFL has been at its lowest, and together we fought and struggled to get to where we are now. JFL has excellent quality of care and compassion. Our patients are telling us so. We have evolved, and we are ready for our CMS survey. I am confident that JFL meets all conditions of participation. We are on the precipice of great change. One characteristic of a great leader is not attempting to do everything himself, but knowing how to surround himself with great talent to make the task easier, and the results more effective. I have endeavored to do that, and I have surrounded myself with the greatest team any leader can ask for. And now that I walk away from this leadership, I am confident that this team guided by this leader will continue to take JFL on its trajectory of growth. We should all feel comforted in that fact.

But we did not do it alone. We asked for help and help came in the form of:

- The great JFL staff
- The excellent physicians and nurses
- The District and Territorial Boards
- Premier
- Greeley
- Ropes and Gray
- Patient Family Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- AARP
- Former Congresswoman Donna Christensen
- Former Governor John P. DeJongh
- The 30th and 31st Legislature of the Virgin Islands
- Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett
- Governor Kenneth Mapp

To all the people in this community, in the churches, schools, social organizations who lifted us up in prayer. I personally thank you. I personally thank all my family for their support during this journey.

At the beginning of this journey, I asked my wife and kids for permission to walk this difficult journey.

I spoke to my wife first, who was happy to have me back and hesitant to see me return to the line of fire. However, she knows my love for the hospital and the people of St. Croix. As a result she encouraged me to ask the children for permission. One morning before school we sat together and I asked them whether I should go back. They responded, "Daddy we do not like what they are doing to you, so we don't think you should go back." I explained my thinking and hopefully provided a life lesson by saying, "There are times when you have to stand up for what you think is right, thereby making your life worthwhile. That is why I want to go back."

My children replied, "Well if that is how you feel we support you, but we don't like what they are doing to you." I told them of the poem by Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken". And had them memorize it. They learned it that very day. They recited it to me that night.

The Road Not Taken

By Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.

*I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged
in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.*

I thank my wife Dawn, and my children, Kira, Nyla, Maya and Kenny for allowing me to walk this journey and for giving me the support and strength every day to stay on mission. Like the Samurai sword that is forged in the greatest heat and pounded by the sword maker, I am now prepared for whatever new task lays ahead of me. But for now, I return to my passion and continue to serve the people of the Virgin Islands in my capacity of a physician.

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Cardiologist, Former CEO

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