

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Local Students Impress Senators With MLK Presentations At Senate Hearing; Gittens Hopeful For Territory's Future

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ST. CROIX -- Senator Kenneth Gittens, chairman of the Committee of Rules and Judiciary said on Wednesday that he is once again filled with pride after hearing presentations made by three St. Thomas high school students – Irvin Mason Jr., All Saints Cathedral School; Jair Smith, Seventh Day Adventist School and Khalese Potter, V.I. Montessori School/ Peter Gruber International Academy. He said the students were among eight students honored by the Hebrew Congregation of St. Thomas on January 15 in observance of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

“The eight students were each chosen by their school for possessing the qualities, values and ideals of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. As I sat among those in attendance last week and heard the speeches from each of the eight honorees, I had a renewed sense of hope in our territory. Each student spoke with vision, purpose and conviction. From that group of eight, we were able to get three students to present during our committee hearing Wednesday and again I was impressed by their poise, enthusiasm and intelligence,” Mr. Gittens said.

The students read their essays that focused on the ideals and character of the slain civil rights leader, then further fielded impromptu questions from senators on a number of current issues and social ills across the territory. The second-term Democrat said the student had not been able to prepare for the questions that were thrown at them, but did a remarkable job representing themselves and by their responses, the other senators in attendance were equally as impressed and encouraged.

“Nobody had to coach them on what to say or how to answer these questions on gun violence, legalization of marijuana or youth services. These students showed that they pay attention to the news and the issues that affect them and the wider community. They showed that they are certainly preparing themselves to lead these Virgin Islands to brighter days. I commend them, I congratulate their parents and their entire school community,” Mr. Gittens said.

The other students honored were: Jemai Gerald, Antilles School; Tommy Wise, Charlotte Amalie High School; Vela Culbert, Giff Hill School; Sherwin S. Williams, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School and Camille Emanuel, Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic School.