

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Seizing Opportunity, Delegate Plaskett Pushes Equal Voting Rights For Virgin Islanders

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Ernice Gilbert **May 17, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett seized a rare opportunity to push what has long been a major part of her agenda as the territory's representative in Washington: equal voting rights for U.S. Virgin Islanders.

At the Hillary Clinton campaign event on Monday, where former President Bill Clinton was set to talk, Ms. Plaskett was chosen to introduce Mr. Clinton, and captured the chance to clearly make known her disdain for the current arrangement that bars Virgin Islanders from being able to vote for a U.S. president.

"As Virgin Islands residents we are aware that we do not have the right to vote for our president in November," she said. "I and others have been very vocal about this injustice; which is a bitter visage of colonialism, and to some extent racism [towards] the people of our territory for voting who our president should be.

Ms. Plaskett also lauded the territory's people as resilient and politically attuned.

"Mr. President, this is the most resilient, authentic, politically engaged people in the United States," she said. "A people who have contributed to this country even before we were a part of this country. The descendants of survivors of enslavement, who are one of two peoples in the new world to gain emancipation on their own through the overthrow of their suppressors. A people who fought to be part of the draft and willingly fight and give the ultimate sacrifice in greater numbers than any other American; without voting for their commander-in-chief. A people who, aside from living in paradise, continue to enrich America through our talented young people again and again, and again."

The freshman congresswoman did all of this in minutes, fully aware of the tight schedule that would require the former president to be onstage at an exact time. And for good measure, she praised Mr. Clinton, deeming his years as president as some of the best America has seen.

Mrs. Plaskett announced her support for Mrs. Clinton, which she said was based on the candidate's pledge to help assure that the territory's residents would be able to vote for president, and her dedication to advancing the islands' cause in regards to healthcare, education and economic growth.

"We have a say of who the candidate will be in November through our presidential primary, and we're exercising that right tonight. On June 4, all Virgin Islanders can vote for which delegate will represent them and vote on their behalf at the upcoming National Democratic Convention," she said, announcing that her support lies with Mrs. Clinton.

And Mrs. Plaskett assailed the Republican presumptive nominee, Donald Trump, as someone who represents principles that are a stark contrast with that of Virgin Islanders, especially, she said, as the territory pushes for equal voting rights.

"One thing that has been very clear during this presidential election is that the people of the United States must defeat Donald Trump," Mrs. Plaskett said to a roaring crowd. "Donald Trump's positions and policies are an insidious virus infecting hatred and paranoia on what is still the greatest country in the world."