

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A Letter to Our Leaders

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Staff **February 16, 2017**



Dear Delegate to Congress, Governor, Lt. Governor and Senators,

I'm writing to gain a better understanding of your perspective on the Transfer Day Centennial Commemoration. The Centennial Commission's position as mentioned by Executive Director Kevin Jackson is that the purpose of these events is to focus on the achievements during the last 100 years as a people. Though it is important to acknowledge great Virgin Islanders and their accomplishments, there has been an aspect of the relationship between the Virgin Islands and the United States of America that has been largely disregarded.

As a citizen I am curious about our elected political leaders' position on the matter of our classification as people of African descent at the time of transfer as well as the position of the United Nations in regards to colonization and fundamental human rights.

At the time of the Transfer from Denmark to the United States, the international law (referred to as the "Law of Nations"), that the United States accepted as valid and legal, referred to Indigenous Peoples as well as people of African descent as "Uncivilized Heathens". My first question to the leaders of this territory is:

Do you think that the Centennial Commemorative events should explore the effect that the United States' agreement to the belief that people of African descent were "Uncivilized Heathens" may have had on the relationship between United States and the Virgin Islands?

Lastly, in November of 2016 the United States of America issued a pledge outlining their commitment to human rights around the world. One of these pledges include a commitment to "advancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the UN system, including the UN General Assembly and its Third Committee." On December 14, 1960 the General Assembly, the body in which the United States made the commitment to, adopted the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People". The first three declarations are as follows:

1. The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights, is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and is an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.
2. All peoples have the right to self-determination, by virtue of that right; they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.
3. Inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.

Along with these declarations, the United Nations "proclaims the necessity of bringing to a speedy and unconditional end, colonialism in all its forms and manifestations." Currently the Virgin Islands is a colony of the United States. The Transfer Day Centennial events commemorates our relationship with the United States with little acknowledgement of the United States' commitment to the United Nations' and their objections to the continuation of colonialism. My final question is this:

As our elected officials, do you think that it is in the best interest of the people of the Virgin Islands to commemorate an event so closely tied to colonialism when the United Nations have proclaimed its disapproval to continued acts of colonialism?

Submitted on Thursday by: Tarik McMillan