

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A Slave Ship By Another Name

Opinion / **Published On March 25, 2017 12:06 PM /**

Staff **March 25, 2017**



Editor's Note: This opinion piece was submitted to The Consortium on Wednesday by a group called Elders of the Virgin Islands, in response to an article published here titled, [Ships From Denmark To Arrive In Territory As Part Of Transfer Day Commemoration](#). The group contends that the ships are replicas of slave ships and should be identified correctly. The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author, and may not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the staff and management of The Consortium.

The Kingdom of Denmark made its first incursion into the coral blue waters of St. Thomas, Caribbean in 1663. Much like their counter parts from England, France and Spain who, before and after them, were ill prepared for what they would meet. These interlopers all shared the same attitude covered under their so-called Doctrine of Discovery. Whatever they found/discovered, and whomever they encountered were there to be possessed or dominated – bent to their will – or destroyed through genocidal ethnic cleansing.

The Danes, those that survived the second coming of 1666, brought with them a form of enslavement that would, in the words of the Frederick Douglass, in fact “...embarrass a nation of savages.” The Danes being late to the game of enslavement were enticed, as others were by the promise of fortunes earned through the blood money of enslavement. From the beginning, they sought not only to dominate the kidnapped and enslaved Africans, many of whom were from Ghana, and who recognized those among them who were their elders, kings/queens and warriors, but to deprive them of their sense of dignity and self-worth.

Employing the skill of civil and military organization the St. John Rebellion of 1733, the first successful rebellion of enslaved Africans in the western hemisphere, was carried out. The pride and place of our ancestral heroes – both male and female – must not be lost in the present mailstrum of lies, bigotry, corruption and ignorance.

We must reject with all our heart, mind and spirit the present incursion – the forceful interjection – of any symbol of the Danish, or other European period of enslavement of our ancestors and the wanton destruction of our brothers the Tiano, Arawak and Caribe nations and peoples. Whether the so-called “offer” of allowing our children, at their level of naivety and suggestibility, to even think about boarding a replica of a “slave ship” during the the 100th year commemoration of the transfer of the then Danish West Indies to the United States of America, would send a message or imprint an indelible impression that we; 1) were consulted, or given a voice in our fate, and 2) that we were somehow participants in this form of slave trading. We must register our objection at the highest levels including that of the United Nations and the World Court, The Hague.

We only, are responsible for our children’s health and safety including their cognitive development and mental acuity. They must be protected by us, from this blatant, unfeeling affront to our national dignity and honor caused by introducing this most egregious and disagreeable symbol of our ancestor’s captivity and enslavement. This slight shall not go uncontested into the minds/memory of our children without explanation, history or context. No one would suggest that Germany send a replica of the trains that carried so many innocent Jews of the holocaust to the 100th-year celebration of Holocaust Memorial Day. No one, that is, unprepared to accept annihilation (politically, economically, personally and even nationally obliteration). And, yet, we are expected to capitulate to the same type of insane idea.

We, who endured the ravages of being kidnapped, the torture of separation and estrangement from our mother land – to return no more – who clung to the belief that there is a God of redemption not revenge are somehow seen as underserving of the simplest respect; not to be held up to ridicule by those who owe their very cultural, economic and political existence to us! Are we not more deserving of payment, as the Germans now pay to Israel, and the unconditional support and respect of the world?

From 1444 to the present we have endured the scorn and unvarnished mean-spiritedness of the interlopers and their off springs. Not anymore! WE shall rise and write a new chapter in our book of life. "Power concedes nothing without a demand, never has and never will." (Frederick Douglass) We shall make our just demand, but, we will not allow our future, as a Just and Wise people, to be determined by those jaded and corrupted by outright lies and half-truths. We will fight and contest any enemy who dares defile our ancestral and sacred heritage, we shall establish a just and honorable tradition of resistance upon the high seas and if they dare venture onto our sacred space will fight their cowardly lot there to the last woman and man; "...the arch of history is long, but it bends toward justice." (ML King)

We shall surround these ghost ships with an armada of fishing vessels and pleasure boats. Ships of our own history and culture. We shall, as in Moby Dick cause a whirlpool of such magnitude in the Caribbean sea that will claim these symbols of pain and death as it claimed the bodies of our ancestors; and, even as they disappear from our sight we will tell our children the story of the ship that transported our ancestors from their homes and families to a place of torment and death, even The Sweet Ship Jesus.