

The Virgin Islands Consortium

As VI Ambassador, Pressure Should Speak Like A Thomian, Not Jamaican, Sen. Kurt Vialet Says

Business / **Published On March 29, 2017 11:57 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 29, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- Second-term Democrat Senator Kurt Vialet said during a Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture hearing on Tuesday, that Pressure Busspipe, a USVI Ambassador paid by the Department of Tourism to represent the U.S. Virgin Islands, should speak like a St. Thomian, and stop sounding as if he's from the island of Jamaica.

Mr. Vialet -- as well as Senator Alicia Hansen -- contended that what they deem as Pressure's Jamaican-sounding way of speaking, will inadvertently lead potential tourists to believe that he's from the land of reggae, and not from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Mr. Violet also called for the "Virgin Islands Nice" song to be reproduced using themes of local music such as Quelbe. He said a new version could include the likes of Quelbe legends Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights.

"Sometimes as soon as they hear, no matter what the word is, they take it as Jamaican, so I wish they would redo the V.I. Nice to a quelbe or something that is more local to the Virgin Islands," Mr. Violet said, describing that observation as his first issue with Pressure's way of promoting the territory.

"The second issue I have -- and I'll put it out there whether it's popular or not popular -- I think that the individual needs to speak in the twang of the local people," Mr. Violet said, referring to Pressure. "So the individual needs to speak like a Thomian and not speak like a Jamaican. Because when you speak like a Jamaican they think you're from Jamaica. So if you're our icon, the person [whose] song we're using, every interview you do you sound like a Jamaican, then when they hear V.I. Nice they think you're Jamaican." Mrs. Hansen could be heard in the background agreeing with Mr. Violet, as she'd made the same point earlier during the hearing.

"I want them to hear, when they hear V.I. Nice, that they think you're Thomian," Mr. Violet said. "So I want you to say, 'heh', and 'deh', and 'ova deh' -- speak like a St. Thomian and be proud of where you're from." Mr. Violet stressed his respect for Pressure. "He's an excellent artist, but speak like a St. Thomian."

He continued: "All Trini artists speak like Trini, Jamaican artists speak like Jamaicans, so Virgin Islands artists need to speak like Virgin Islanders -- and we need to switch that music to a local rhythm with the same V.I. Nice. Same thing."

Department of Tourism Commissioner, Beverly Nicholson-Doty, revealed that D.O.T. pays \$200,000 annually to the owners of the "V.I. Nice" song -- Pressure and Laurent "Tippy" Alfred -- for its use. Pressure, as an ambassador, is paid whenever he accompanies D.O.T. for its various marketing trips.

"We need to make sure that every time you're talking about the Virgin Islands, speak like a St. Thomian," Mr. Violet continued to stress. "We cannot have a Jamaican accent representing the Virgin Islands. This is nothing negative towards Jamaica or anything, but we're talking about tourism products."

To Mr. Violet's point, St. Thomas artists R. City, [world-renowned](#) for their writing work for major artists like Beyoncé and Rihanna, and for their chart-topping hit single with Adam Levine, "Locked Away", speak in their St. Thomian accent during all their interviews -- big or small.

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Pressure, however, appears to go back and forth between his St. Thomian accent, proper grammar and a Jamaican accent -- the latter influenced by the genre of music he sings: Reggae.

For comparison, we've included two interviews below, one featuring R. City and the other featuring Pressure -- incidentally the two top Virgin Islands artists currently -- so you can decide for yourself.

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