

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Reeling From Backlash Involving Pressure's Accent, Violet Says He Was 'Misunderstood'

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ST. CROIX -- In a Facebook post published late Thursday, Senator Kurt Violet -- reeling from a firestorm that erupted [following his comments about V.I. superstar Pressure Busspipe's accent](#), contending that Pressure should speak like a St. Thomian and not like a Jamaican -- said he was misunderstood.

Mr. Violet, who said he had read all the comments relating to his remarks made on Tuesday during a Senate Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture hearing, reiterated in his post on Thursday night that he sees Pressure as a great artist, however, his remarks were made in relation to the Department of Tourism's advertising campaign, in which D.O.T. pays Pressure to be the voice of the Virgin Islands.

"Reggae is always affiliated with the island of Jamaica and the intent of the commercial is to lure visitors to our shores. It would be naive to believe that mainstream America knows everything about the Virgin Islands and hence, our commercial should clearly differentiate our distinctive qualities," Mr. Violet said in his post, seen [here](#). "My concern was whether or not the potential tourist would be able to clearly determine that this is a V.I. commercial or whether or not it is one that represents our competitor, Jamaica. I have heard the back and forth but I reflect on the following artists Rihanna, Montano, Dextra, Onyan, Oliver, Mark Anthony etc... do you have to think twice to know which island they represent?"

The second-term Democrat stressed that the issue was not what the territory knows about Pressure, but rather the advertising campaign which he says was created to lure tourists from around the world to the territory -- many of whom know nothing about the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"I have always supported anyone from this diverse, cultural melting pot, we call home! I will never apologize for being a proud Virgin Islander! The Virgin Islands Nice!" he concluded.

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Mr. Violet is referring to the reggae song "V.I. Nice". The song distinctly identifies the territory's three main islands, talks about its icons and history, and includes the V.I. flag prominently. The song was brilliantly arranged, bringing across its message clearly, while maintaining a catchy tune that can be universally enjoyed. And Mr. Violet's mention of Rihanna fails to convey his message. Rihanna may sound like a Bajan when she speaks, but her songs are distinctly pop -- unless it's one of the tracks where she attempts to highlight the Caribbean genres like Reggae. And artists like Machel Montano and Dextra singing Soca music, which has strong ties to their homeland Trinidad.

The senator did not address his remarks where he says Pressure should remake the "V.I. Nice" song to Quelbe. And his post has been receiving mixed reviews, with some agreeing with the lawmaker, while others disagree.

The story ignited conversations across the Virgin Islands, with residents from all walks of life joining in the discussion -- most disagreeing with Mr. Violet's stance. Memes and videos were also birthed that either seriously criticized or lampooned the senator. The discussion also made it to local radio.

Mr. Violet — as well as Senator Alicia Hansen — contended on Tuesday 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. Vialet 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. Vialet, 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. Vialet 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. Vialet 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. Vialet 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. Vialet’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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*Feature Image: Pressure sings at the launch of his "Red Rose" album, held at balter.
(Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)*

[Watch the original video](#)

