

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Acting Governor Potter Denounces Use Of Confederate Flag In Territory

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Two Caucasian men aboard vessel displaying Confederate flag at Brewers Bay on Sunday.

ST. THOMAS -- Acting Governor Osbert Potter denounced an incident that occurred on Sunday at John Brewers Bay, St. Thomas, where a dingy boat with multiple occupants approached the shores with a Confederate flag prominently displayed alongside the American flag on the boat.

This took place during the "What's Going on St. Thomas" event which was a fundraiser for My Brother's Workshop, according to Mr. Potter's office. The attendees at the event were enraged and expressed concerns and offense towards the flying of the Confederate flag in the territory, according to Mr. Potter, who is currently serving as governor while Governor Kenneth Mapp is away.

"The Confederate flag is not welcomed, not accepted, nor tolerated in the Virgin Islands under any circumstances," Mr. Potter said. "The Confederate flag represents divisiveness, bigotry, slavery, and oppression. This is totally out of line with what we as Virgin Islands residents embrace, which is unity and acceptance of all people, regardless of race, color, religion or creed. The flying of the flag is totally offensive to Virgin Islanders, and I will not tolerate this blatant display of hatred to our people."

Mr. Potter ordered the perpetrators of what he referred to as an offense, to cease and desist immediately. He stated that the flying of the Confederate flag is not welcomed neither on the waters or on land in the USVI.

The Sunday incident received immediate and united backlash from Virgin Islanders, with multiple people capturing the unusual sight and sharing it on social media. The image was shared on The Consortium's Facebook platform as well, with residents calling for the publication to dig further into the matter.

In 1860-61, eleven southern states seceded from the United States to protect the institution of slavery, forming the Confederate States of America and precipitating the Civil War. During the war, the Confederacy and its military forces used a variety of flags, but the flag that became most associated with the Confederacy was the so-called "battle flag."

Organizations such as the Sons of Confederate Veterans adopted the flag as a symbol of Southern heritage but the flag also served as a potent symbol of slavery and white supremacy, which has caused it to be very popular among white supremacists in the 20th and 21st centuries. This popularity extends to white supremacists beyond the borders of the United States.

Today, the use of the Confederate flag is often controversial. While a number of non-extremists still use the flag as a symbol of Southern heritage or pride, there is growing recognition, especially outside the South, that the symbol is offensive to many Americans.