

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor | A New Reality After Hurricanes Irma And Maria

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Staff **September 26, 2017**



Dear Editor,

As the last patients at the hospitals in the U.S. Virgin Islands are evacuated out of the territory to other jurisdictions to receive their care, I realize in a very tangible and matter-of-fact way that what used to be is not what is or will be again.

And as of our friends and family from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and throughout the region leave on mercy missions and by other means, I realize too that as Caribbean people we are currently in the midst of the ending of an era.

Our reference points will be "before Hurricanes Irma and Maria", "during Hurricanes Irma and Maria", and "after Hurricanes Irma and Maria".

The "before" will be remembered for the ways we used to do things - both the good ways and the not so good - and for the self-obsessed ambitions that consumed so many of us at our core. For many the "before" was the period of when enough was never enough and our obsession with pleasure was measured in excess.

The "during" will be remembered as the "Jesus Moment". This was when many desperately looked to the almighty for mercy from devastation, as even the most devout heathens among us begged God to save them or their loved ones for at least one more day.

The "after" has already begun for all of us. Despite the discomfort that must be endured under the current circumstances, the "after" marks a new beginning; a fresh start; a leveling of the field.

For me, I'm optimistic that a new courageous and creative generation of Caribbean artists and craftsman and poets and youthful entrepreneurs and civic and business leaders and scholars and doers moreso than talkers will emerge to shape an "After Hurricanes Irma and Maria" reality rooted in the best of our rich history and generational values. A reality that brings together the resilience and vibrancy of community.

For that future, I am optimistic.

Submitted on Monday by: Moleto A. Smith Jr., St. Thomas resident.