

The Virgin Islands Consortium

At St. Croix Young Democrats Event, Hope For The Future

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ST. CROIX -- The Young Democrats of St. Croix's first 2018 meeting, dubbed "Turning the Virgin Islands Blue", was deemed a success by the nationally chartered group's president, Troy Williams, who told The Consortium that Tuesday's event was one of many preceding the 2018 primary election in August as well as the general election in November.

Though he was satisfied with the turnout, Mr. Williams said having more young people at such events, which was held at the Lamp Post Lounge and Bar in Castle Coakley, is what the group aims to accomplish.

Millennials started trickling into the small facility at about 6:30 p.m., mingling and networking as a deejay kept the atmosphere lively. A majority of those in attendance were either in their late 20s or early to mid 30s, but there were also adults 40 and older in attendance. Senate candidates Javan James and [Allison DeGazon](#) were the only two newcomers in attendance; Senators Kurt Vialet and Sammuel Sanes -- the latter [running as lieutenant governor with Allison Petrus](#) -- were present (they were all given an opportunity to speak following the completion of the official agenda). Albert Bryan, who has keynoted a Young Democrats event in the past, was also present.

Local entrepreneur Rashidi Clenace, who was invited to speak about business and finding success, said he was in the "struggle" phase of his journey, and suggested unity as a tested path to positive growth. "It takes all of us to make a difference; it takes all of us to make a change," he said.

Ashley Scotland, Young Democrats of St. Croix's vice president, introduced the night's keynote, Senator Janelle Sarauw, an Independent. Mr. Scotland, who is also an opinions editor for The Consortium, said Ms. Sarauw was chosen because young people at previous events requested that a millennial like themselves keynote a future gathering. He said Ms. Sarauw's run and subsequent victory following a [momentous court battle with Kevin Rodriguez](#), was "definitely inspiring."

Taking to the podium, Ms. Sarauw's speech was short but inspirational. She revealed that she had immediately rejected the invitation without reading its contents, as it came from the Democrats -- "The same party that spent thousands of dollars to keep me out my seat," she reminded. But when she was told that the invitation came from the Young Democrats, the senator had a change of heart. "I went home and I thought about it for quite some time, and I was like, you know what, I feel honored that the party stepped outside, went against the grain, and invited me to speak."

Using her successful battle against a Democratic Party candidate, Kevin Rodriguez, Ms. Sarauw, who was once a Democrat and hinted that she might rejoin the party, sought to express to young people that the seemingly impossible can be achieved, even in a climate fraught with special interests. And she spoke about the need for a revolution: "So, we had two Category 5 storms and that shouldn't be a setback. We should remember that in order for us to build and to expand, you have to destroy things sometimes," Ms. Sarauw said. "We should not call what God has given us, an opportunity, a curse. He uses chaos and destruction as a backdrop for his glory. If you follow the Bible, King Solomon was born of an affair. Beauty comes from chaos."

She said millennials have a role to play in the destiny of the territory and that it should not be abdicated. Ms. Sarauw called for a reset and fresh start. "It's time for a revolution," she said, adding that almost every major notable revolution started with young people.

Following the event, attendees appeared impressed. Sacha Alexander, a Consortium live events host who emceed the meeting, said she felt inspired by being among like-minded people, all of whom appeared to care deeply about the territory's future.

The group's next major event will be the arrival of Ryan Terrell to the VI, the southeast regional director of the Young Democrats. Mr. Terrell, who will be on St. Croix in mid-March, will assess the territory's recovery six months following the 2017 storms, so as to

better lobby for aid from Democratic congresspeople on behalf of the territory, Mr. Williams said.

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