

The Virgin Islands Consortium

History Is Made In USVI With First Ever LGBTQ Pride Parade On St. Croix

Human Interest / **Published On June 10, 2018 11:38 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 10, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- The gathering was building slowly after the 9:00 a.m. hour at the clock tower in Frederiksted on Saturday. The event itself -- the first ever lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (L.G.B.T.Q.) pride parade, which is held every year in countries around the world as part of pride month -- was scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m., and the mostly Caucasian crowd that gathered at first, was leading some observers to believe that local L.G.B.T.Q. community members of African descent would shy away from the historic affair following a furor that raged for days on local radio shows and on social media [after the parade was announced.](#)

When the 10:00 a.m. hour arrived, the crowd had built to a respectable amount of individuals and organizations, but Blacks in the local L.G.B.T.Q. community were still scarce. As the parade moved on from the Frederiksted Pier and onward to the Sand Castle Hotel, however, the representation of Black natives increased -- although it paled in comparison to the large representation of Whites who dominated the parade.

But color of skin, gender or sexual orientation were afterthoughts on Saturday, as the St. Croix L.G.B.T.Q. community unified in love and in defiance against marginalization, and bonded their spirits for one big show of defiance.



Pride parade supporter holds up sign. (Credit: Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

First in line was a truck that hosted a deejay, which looped the popular gay song by Macklemore and Ryan Lewis titled "[Same Love](#)". Immediately behind the truck were representatives of the Women's Coalition of St. Croix, who held the nonprofit's banner in a show of support. There were some Jeep Wranglers with L.G.B.T.Q. members and supporters giving away colored necklaces; others flung confetti into the sky and towards onlookers, who showed their support with sometimes deafening cheers.

Law enforcement officers lined the route of the parade from start to finish, a response that was based on conversations that had raged in the community leading up to the parade. But aside from some loitering that occurred earlier in the day, when trash like old couches and a refrigerator, among other refuse, were placed near the fish market to block the parade route (the V.I.P.D. worked swiftly to clean the street before the parade commenced), the event started and ended without incident.

As the parade proceeded and arrived near the fish market, Rastafarians stood in protest, some using vulgar and derogatory language to describe the participants. "Burn all of you out! More fire in all you funny f*cking people! Boom bye bye in a batty boy head! We don't ramp with all you," yelled one protester, who quoted Reggae artist Buju Banton's infamous [gay-denigrating song](#). (For perspective on the song, Buju Banton wrote it at the age of 15 in response to a widely publicized man/boy rape case in Jamaica. The song was re-released in 1992 on a popular rhythm and caused an international uproar after receiving commercial radio play in the U.S. The artist, [who since 2011 has been serving](#) a 10-year prison sentence for his role in setting up a cocaine deal, has abandoned the song.)



Pride parade participant and protester hold discussion. (Credit: Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

Other protesters held up signs, one of which read, "Virgin Islands nice, not nasty". In contrast, a supporter of the L.G.B.T.Q. community held up a sign that read, "Kiss whoever the f*^# you want."

There were tamed protesters as well, some of whom held up signs that included biblical scriptures against same-sex, and abstained from yelling and making disparaging remarks.

Yet the crowd of participants and supporters of the parade overwhelmed that of its dissenters. This was most vividly on display as the group of Rastafarians at the fish market continued to protest as parade participants danced alongside them with smiles on their faces, seemingly ignoring the opposing voices as they made their way to the Sand Castle Hotel.

Once near the hotel, participants danced and cheered in satisfaction of the parade's success. There, they lauded the V.I.P.D. for its strong presence, an action Territorial



McFarland said was part of his duty in protecting the territory's

Pride parade participant dances in the streets. (Credit: Cruselda

Roberts, VIC)

"Regardless of what we do, we have to do it peacefully," Chief McFarland said. "At the end of the day these individuals pay taxes, work in our community and are members of our community, and because of that my obligation is to the safety of this community, and that's what we did today."

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, who was at the event showing support, said, "Freedom of speech. Everybody deserves to live in peace."

She added, "We have bigger problems; let's protest the things we need to be protesting."

Gubernatorial candidate Albert Bryan -- the only gubernatorial hopeful who participated -- said the Virgin Islands is for all people. "Not just for some," he stressed, "but for all."

Everybody is included and we're here to support the rights of everybody."

Mr. Bryan said were he to be elected governor, he would enhance acceptance of the L.G.B.T.Q. community in the U.S. Virgin Islands with education. "I think we really need to be educated... We have to remember that a mere 67 years ago we were the ones who people wanted to castrate. We were the ones who were hosed when we were marching -- we were the ones who they didn't want in their schools. So we have to realize that in this world people have a right to be who they are, and everyday we need to celebrate the beauty of one's self," Mr. Bryan said.



Man proudly participates in pride parade. (Credit: Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

The organizers of the event, 17-year-old Imani Evans and STX Pride founder Bob Palmatier, thanked participants for their support, and Mr. Palmatier especially thanked the V.I.P.D. for keeping the parade safe.

"It was a lot to organize this but we got it done. And at the end of the day there's 200 supporters and 20 people who were opposing us, so I think we did a pretty good job," Ms. Evans said.

Feature Image: Pride participate holds balloons high on pride parade route. (Credit: Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

[Watch the original video](#)

© Viconsortium 2026