

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Albert Bryan Jr. Takes Oath Of Office As 9th Elected Governor Of U.S. Virgin Islands

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ST. THOMAS -- Albert Bryan Jr. on Monday took the oath of office as the ninth elected governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, capping off a momentous journey that was years in the making. The event took place at the Emancipation Garden in St. Thomas before the 12 noon deadline set by Virgin Islands law, and came with the traditional exchange of power program.

The mood of the event was rather mellow; while there were loud cheers when Mr. Bryan and Mr. Roach were announced as the governor and lieutenant governor of the Virgin Islands after taking the oath of office, and before and after the men gave their speeches, the inauguration event happened fairly quickly with little fanfare.



From left to right: Governor Albert Bryan with wife and daughters.

For Mr. Roach, who spoke of migrating from his birth land of St. Kitts and Nevis, a hard decision for his mother at time, the embrace he received from the Virgin Islands has been a transformative experience -- and he believes there are many lessons that U.S. mainlanders could learn from the territory. He also spoke of his deep love for St. Thomas and by extension the entire U.S. Virgin Islands. A former journalist, Mr. Roach crafted a beautiful speech that encompassed his entire life experience, which has led him to the second highest office of the land. Mr. Roach also reminisced on the time when the U.S. Virgin Islands was the Caribbean's center of attraction, when commerce was at its peak, and new businesses were opening seemingly everyday.

"Throughout the course of the campaign, we have talked about those glory days of the islands in the time of our great prosperity, to now that our once masterful tourism product appears to trail other destinations in the Caribbean, from which we drew a labor supply eager for new opportunities... But this is our time to be good again," Mr. Roach said. "We can be good again, we can be mighty again, if we so choose. We just have to be willing and eager -- each should be a role; we have to believe in ourselves and in these islands, these precious gems which once were the center of the world."



Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach

The lieutenant governor then trained his speech to the governor, speaking of Mr. Bryan's persistence in courting him to join the Change Course Now team.

"To Albert, I thank you for being persistent, for encouraging me to undertake this journey with you and now I have cast my lot with you. The people see us as a great team; in the days to come we will be challenged to stay this course, but I am hopeful that we will. I pledge my support just as I did when I agreed to join you as a team. Many are depending on us and have high expectations that we will remain worthy of their trust," the lieutenant governor said.

When Mr. Bryan took to the podium to give his address, his jovial nature persisted, but he spoke of serious matters confronting the territory, which his administration has vowed to fix. He also asked for the community's patience as his team undertakes what is expected to be a difficult road to recovery. In return, Mr. Bryan said he and his team would be patient in earning the community's trust.



Crowd looks on as Mr. Bryan gives his speech.

"To those who may be hesitant, I invite you to rest down your cynicism and dismiss your pessimism, and to give not only our administration, but our legislators, our teachers, our healthcare providers, our neighbors, friends and family a chance to earn your trust," Mr. Bryan said. "And at the end of the day we must realize that we, each and everyone of us, we are the government."

He added, "I am excited about 2019, and [I] sleep well but not often. I know that we are assembling a team that will at long last begin to bring to a close some of our more vexing issues and take advantage of opportunities to build the Virgin Islands that is prepared for another 100 years of progress under the American flag."

The ceremony included musical performances from the military band, Lorna Freeman and others. It also included a military parade that followed the inauguration ceremony. A selfsame event will be held on St. Croix at the Budhoe Park in Frederiksted this morning.



Mr. Bryan and wife Yolanda Bryan. On the right, former Governor Charles W. Turnbull.

Former Governor Kenneth Mapp was present for the ceremony and appeared to have taken the entire moment in stride, being mostly serious but smiling at times. At the end of the ceremony, he congratulated Mr. Bryan again, wishing him all the best in his new role.

The governor told The Consortium following the ceremony that cabinet members would be announced either Friday or next Tuesday -- a reality that hints to difficulty the Bryan administration is having finding the people it wants as cabinet members, or a painstaking process that demands more time to choose the right individuals.

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