

The Virgin Islands Consortium

After Renaming Raphael O’ Wheatley Skill Center C.A.H.S Annex Without Legislative Approval Conversation About Preserving V.I. History Set in Motion

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The Raphael O’ Wheatley Skill Center was renamed the C.A.H.S. Annex without discussion with the Legislature, which named the building, and when this was brought up during a budget hearing on Thursday it led to a short conversation about still honoring Virgin Islanders who had schools named after them that are now closed.

Senator Janelle Sarauw said during a discussion about where the skill center would move “The Raphael O’ Wheatley Skill Center was established by legislation, that’s a name so if you are going to change the name of the building legislation is needed to change.”

The Commissioner of Education said that they are modernizing the Gladys Abraham School, where the Raphael O’ Wheatley Skill Center will move to and “that’s when legislation will come.”

Curious Ms. Sarauw asked what are you going to do with Ms. Abraham’s name.

Ms. Berry-Benjamin said “That’s when the proposal for the legislation will come, we haven’t reached that stage.”

Ms. Sarauw explained that these are important people in Virgin Islands history to which Ms. Berry-Benjamin responded “one of the creative things that we are doing with all educators to include other outstanding Virgin Islanders is to honor them across and throughout all our facilities.” The commissioner further explained that they would name individual wings or sections in schools after Virgin Islanders “but that of course we will get to with proposed legislation.”

Ms. Sarauw then said “we just renamed a whole facility though without consultation or approval from the body and the body is actually who named the skills center.”

After hearing this discussion Senator Kurt Vialet said “it’s even a bigger problem because we closed schools on St. Croix. We have to have a comprehensive discussion.”

After mentioning Elena Christian, Charles H. Emmanuel, Alexander Henderson, Evelyn Williams, Arthur Richards, Guy Benjamin as examples of schools that honor Virgin Islanders he said “all of those are gone, so in some manner we need to be able to honor those individuals.”