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# A Virgin Islands Founding Father: Calls for Generations Present and Future to Celebrate D. Hamilton Jackson

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**The gravesite of David Hamilton Jackson at the Moravian Cemetery in Christiansted, St. Croix By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM**

Senator Novelle Francis Jr. on Monday described David Hamilton Jackson as a founding father of Virgin Islands and wants to see more educational sessions be undertaken focusing the great Virgin Islander's life.

“We need to tell our children and children’s children about his life, his challenges, and his triumph so they can tell their children how far we have come as a people and how far we can go as a people once we work together to achieve our goals. Jackson was a man of great intellect who was

defined by his leadership, passion, and advocacy,” Mr. Francis said while delivering remarks at Government House on St. Croix to commemorate Liberty Day 2021.

“As we gather today in Government House, the people’s house, I am reminded of the significant role that David Hamilton Jackson had in shaping our community and our government,” he said as he described Mr. Jackson as someone who had a vision for Virgin islanders as an empowered people.

“To examine Mr. Jackson's life is to understand the intersection of history and civic, he is a powerful figure in our Virgin Island history and an equally powerful figure in civic, in particular understanding the rights and obligation of citizens,” Mr. Francis said.

“Mr. Jackson fought for things that we now take for granted such as the right to earn a fair wage, the right to express ourselves, and even the right to organize and be heard, and it is only fitting that we celebrate his life's work not just today but every day,” said the senator, who serves as vice president of the Senate.

“For his life work as a civil rights leader, a labor leader, as a founder of the [newspaper] The Herald and his integral part of drafting the Organic Act of 1936 which laid the groundwork for the Revised Organic Act of 1954, which is the Virgin Islands de facto Constitution, David is certainly a founding father of this territory,” Mr. Francis said. “These are some of the things that the great Hamilton Jackson fought for,” he added, while reminding the audience that normally when the founding fathers of United States is thought of, it’s the names of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton that are mentioned.

To ensure the work of Mr. Jackson and others who contributed to the social transformation of the Virgin Islands is embedded as part of the school’s curriculum, the senator sponsored legislation that made civic mandatory in public high schools because of his admiration for Mr. Jackson.

Besides Mr. Francis, the ceremony was also addressed by Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett, and the keynote address was delivered by former senator Usie Richards. The address focused on the life and work of Mr. Jackson as a “mover and shaker” in Virgin Islands history.

Born in September 1884, David Hamilton Jackson was a [labor rights](#) advocate in the [Danish West Indies](#) which later became the [United States Virgin Islands](#). Mr. Jackson was an important figure in the struggle for increased [civil rights](#) and workers' rights on the islands.

Mr. Jackson worked as an educator and later a bookkeeper and clerk before becoming involved in politics. He successfully petitioned for the repeal of a 1779 law which prohibited independent newspapers and enforced strict censorship on all publications in the territory.

He then established the first free newspaper, The Herald. With the help of Ralph Bough, Mr. Jackson organized the St. Croix Labor Union, in 1913. He also lobbied for the transfer of the islands to American control. He died in 1946.