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Freedom Statue is Rededicated in St. Thomas Amid Territory-Wide Emancipation Day Celebrations

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The Meade Family, led by Jason Meade (far left), also known as the Conch Shell-Blowing Family, on Sunday, July 3, 2022 blew conchells at Emancipation Garden in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

In celebration of 174 years of Emancipation in the territory, Virgin Islanders on Sunday participated in events across the islands to mark the day of bravery and freedom.

On July 3, 1848 the enslaved people on St. Croix collectively rose up against the bondage of the Danish system of slavery. This united front liberated the people of the Danish West Indies, the islands that make up the U.S. Virgin Islands today.

On St. Croix, Frederiksted came alive Sunday evening with a host of events from a number of groups, including a tramp by Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights that started at the Frederiksted Post Office and culminated on the waterfront with Quelbe music and dancing.

At the Buddhoe Park, activities included chanting and dramatic performances featuring a number of artists from the Rastafarian community.



Revelers enjoy Quelbe Music and dancing with Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights on Sun. July 3, 2022 in Frederiksted, as part of Emancipation Day celebrations. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

On St. John, Emancipation Day-themed activities included Quadrille dancers and African dance performers, among other features.

In St. Thomas, young and old gathered at the Davidson Monsanto Bandstand at the Emancipation Garden to celebrate emancipation and the rededication of the Freedom Statue. The Pan African Support Group partnered with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to make this possible.

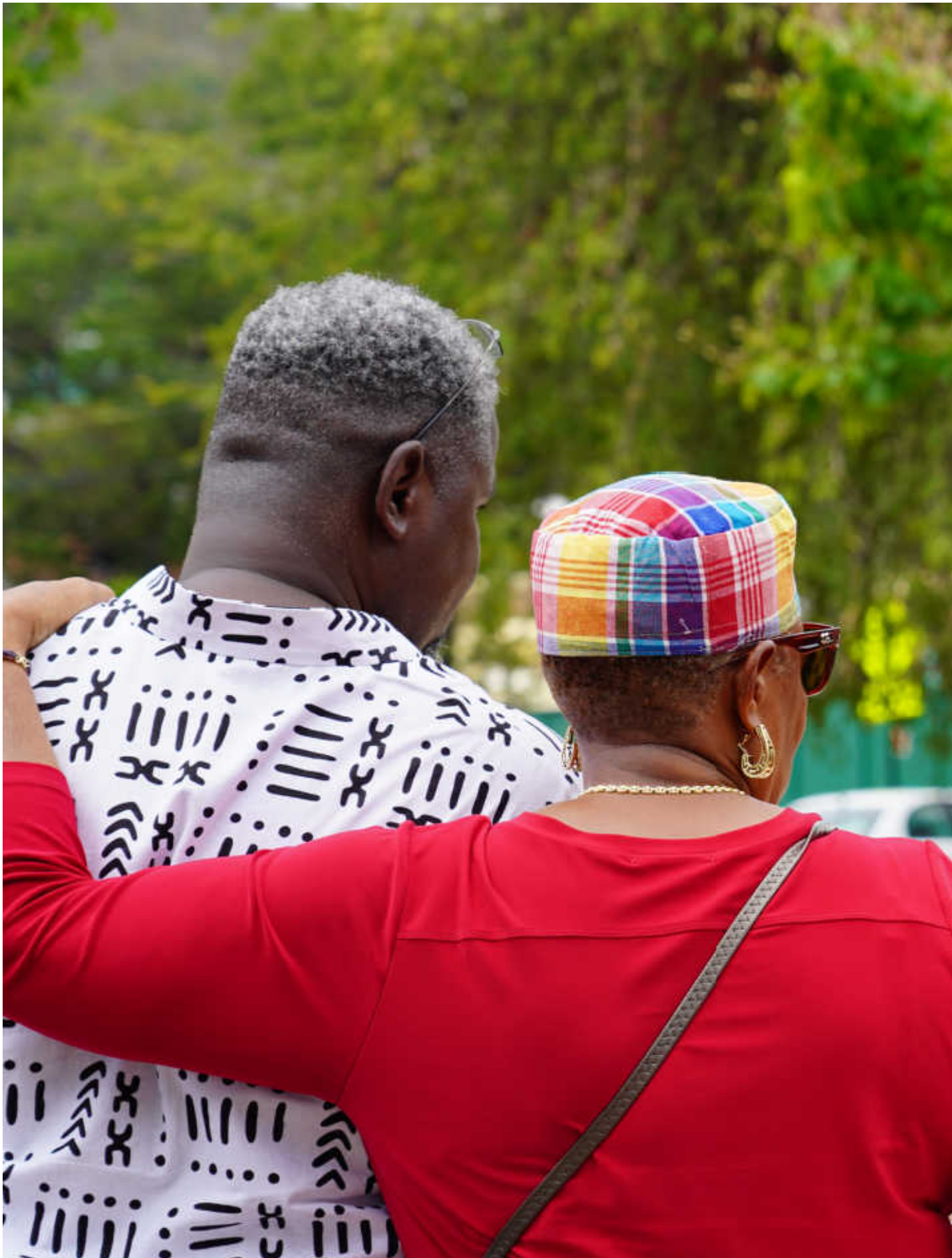
The Pan African Support Group has been in existence since 1980. The main objective is to raise people's consciousness about their history, culture and struggle. They promote cultural integration and foster an environment to practice Pan Africanism.



Artists from the Rastafarian community performed during Emancipation Day activities at the Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted, St. Croix on July 3, 2022. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

Kuumba Ola-Niyi, community activist and a leader in the Pan African Support Group, thanked the many sponsors who made the event possible as well as the community for coming out.

Throughout the program there was live music, poems, and speeches from members of the community. Next was the re-dedication of the Freedom Statue.



“The Freedom Statue is a few yards from us in its rightful location. In the center of this sacred place we call the Emancipation Garden where in 1848 on July 4, enslaved and free came from all quarters of estates and the town of Charlotte Amalie to declare themselves free people, said Myron Jackson, Master of Ceremony. Mr. Jackson, a former lawmaker, sponsored Bill No. 33-0369-Act No. 8402 in the 33rd Legislature. The Act authorized the removal of the copper sculpture of King Christian IX from Emancipation Garden and [replaced it with the statue of "the Conch Shell Blower"](#).

Community members expressed their love for celebrating Emancipation Day. Lynette Squiabro made it a priority to be at the event. “The event held here today was awesome. I really learned a lot just by being here. My favorite part was the blowing of the conch shells,” she said.

Carolyn Davis was eager to celebrate as well. “Anytime there is a liberation of black people or any people, I am very much for it,” she said. “It was a revolution and it is time for another one of the Caribbean people of the Virgin Islands. This means so much to me that I come every year.”