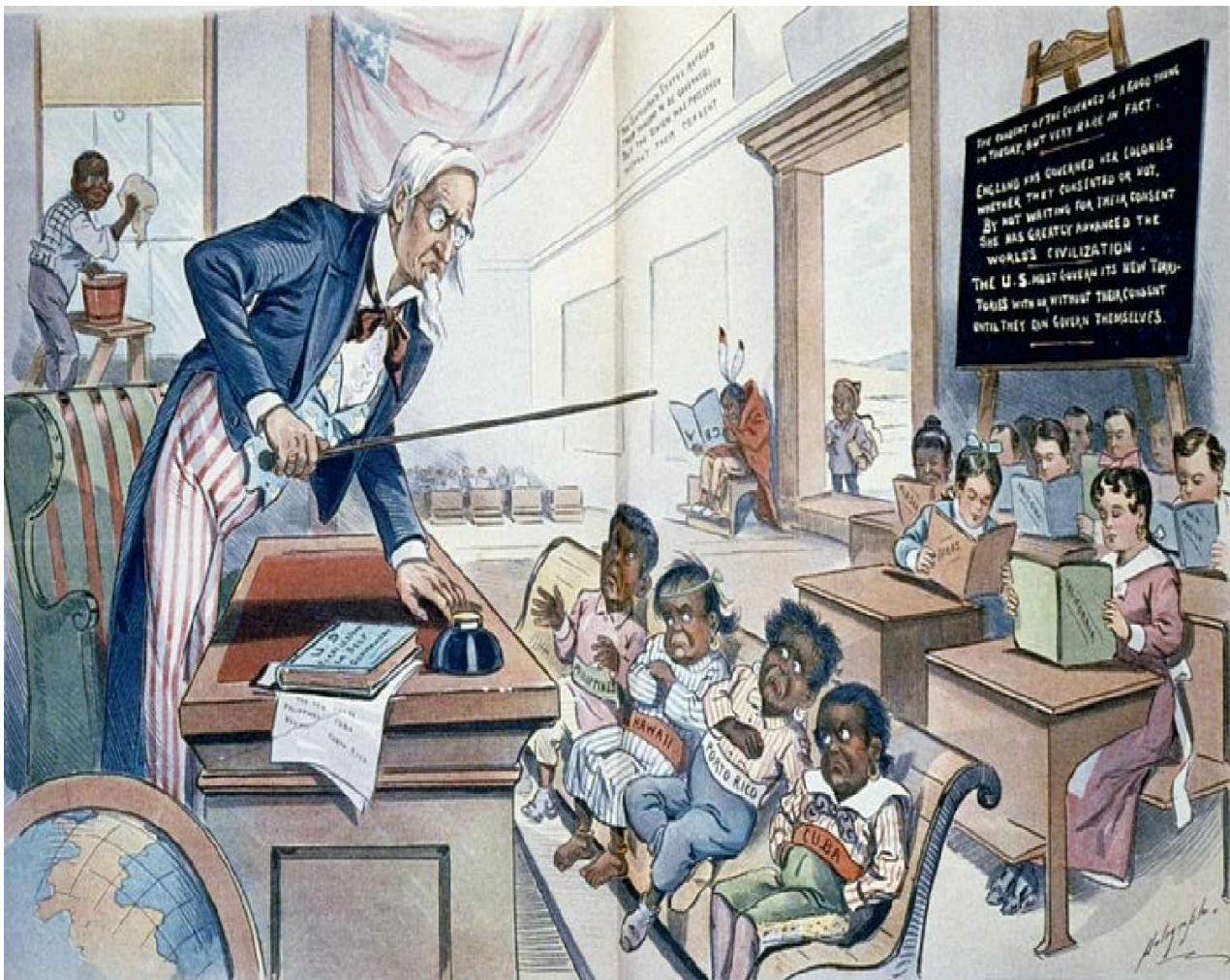


The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Initiative Aims to Tackle Colonialism and Inequality in U.S. Territories

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A new organization vowing to confront American colonialism launched on Wednesday, determined to fight to change the way the United States deals with the approximately 3.6 million people living in its territories — including the U.S. Virgin Islands — in regards to democracy and self-determination.

“It’s time we call it what it is,” said [Right to Democracy](#) in the press release announcing its launch.

Over 98 percent of those living in Puerto Rico, the USVI, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa – the five United States territories – are people of color,

placing in stark relief the racist underpinnings of the Insular Cases, according to Right to Democracy. This series of decisions from the United States Supreme Court has been condemned by current Justices of the court, both liberal and conservative.

Despite its recent rhetoric, the Supreme Court nevertheless has opted not to rule against its 1898 incarnation. The U.S. Department of Justice continues to defend against challenges to the Insular Cases, and the United States Congress has yet to condemn the racist rulings. “All this reflects perhaps the most insidious aspect of the Insular Cases - the creation of a culture of acceptance and normalization of an undemocratic colonial framework,” Right to Democracy says.

This has led to various inequities between residents of U.S. territories and those living on the mainland — less federal support for vulnerable demographics and the lack of equal political representation in Congress, for example.

Co-founded by Adi Martínez-Román and Neil Ware — both of whom have long histories of working to empower communities and strengthen democratic values — the organization hopes to build a coalition of people across the five U.S. territories that will work to confront and dismantle American colonialism in a way that harnesses “common ground solutions or strategies between us,” Ms. Martínez-Román said during the group’s launch on Wednesday.

Virgin Islanders Nesha Christian-Hendrickson – VI Department of Labor Assistant Commissioner – and Donna Christiansen – former VI Delegate to Congress – serve on Right to Democracy’s Board of Directors and Advisory Board respectively.