

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Three Life Sentences Commuted in Surprising Moves by Governor Bryan

Government / **Published On June 23, 2023 12:29 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 23, 2023**



**Governor Albert Bryan, Jr. By. REEMY-REEMZ PHOTOGRAPHY/VICONSORTIUM**

In a series of major moves, Governor Albert Bryan has commuted the life sentences of three inmates in as many days. The trio, who had been incarcerated for offenses ranging from unauthorized firearm use to murder, have all shown significant commitment to self-improvement and reform, according to Government House.

The announcement was made during the commencement exercises of the Transforming Lives Academy, which celebrated the achievements of 10 inmates who had completed high school diplomas and trade certifications.

The first announcement was made on Tuesday when Bryan commuted the life sentence of 72-year-old Felix S. Perez, who had served 37 years for murder. The shocking declaration took place during the graduation ceremony of the Transforming Lives Academy, where 10 inmates were being recognized for their academic and vocational accomplishments.

"I believe in second chances," Bryan stated as he called the surprised Perez to the podium. "Mr. Perez, by the power vested in me as Governor of the Virgin Islands, I am going to commute your life sentence."

Perez, a resident at the John A. Bell Adult Correctional Facility on St. Croix, was convicted in 1988 for first-degree murder. Despite his sentence, Perez dedicated himself to spiritual growth, frequently attending Bible studies and serving as a mentor to his fellow inmates.

The following day, Bryan continued on his path of granting second chances by commuting the sentences of Elliston F. George and Stephan Hyacinth. Both men, according to the governor, have demonstrated a significant commitment to self-reform and have become positive role models in their respective institutions.

George, aged 66, was serving a life sentence at the Keen Mountain Correctional Center in Oakwood, Virginia. Convicted in 1978 for murder and possession of a deadly weapon, George spent his years in prison counseling other inmates on crime prevention and recidivism avoidance strategies.

Hyacinth, a comparatively younger inmate at 38 years old, was in the middle of a 15-year sentence handed down in 2011. The charge was unauthorized use of a firearm during a first-degree assault. Like his fellow recipients of the governor's commutations, Hyacinth made the most of his time in prison, completing multiple rehabilitation programs, achieving certificates of accomplishment, and engaging in community service programs with various government agencies.

Governor Bryan, emphasizing the interconnectedness of Virgin Islanders, spoke about the necessity of reform and the potential for positive contributions from former offenders as they re-integrate into the community. "Today is a day that I really feel honored as the Governor to allow somebody to get a second chance," he stated.

Among the Transforming Lives Academy graduates, Daliqua Moses, Jahkeel Clarke, Rasokemo Archibald, and Tyler Labarrie earned high school diplomas. Aubrey Frett received certification in accounting, while Akenda Weeks and Marciano Rivera became certified automotive repair technicians. Moses also secured a certificate in HR management. Janelle Walters obtained certification in medical billing and coding, while Jerome Wallace and Koi Thomas earned credentials to start their own businesses.