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Historic 175th Anniversary of Emancipation Celebrated in U.S. Virgin Islands

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USVI Dancers. By. MARKETPLACE EXCELLENCE.

July 3rd, 2023, marks an historic day for the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands as the territory commemorates the 175th anniversary of Emancipation. On this day, 175 years ago, a powerful revolt by over 9,000 enslaved people, led by Moses Gottlieb, compelled the Governor-General of the then-Danish West Indies to order an end to the oppressive regime of chattel slavery in the territory.

A week-long series of events culminates today with a Freedom Walk, a symbolic journey from Fort Christian to Fort Frederik. This pre-dawn event, kicking off at 5:00 a.m., served as a potent manifestation of reverence and resilience, honoring the legacy of those who fought so bravely for

freedom.

The Emancipation Day parade kicks off at 9:30 a.m., beginning from the Frederiksted Post Office. The day's festivities will move to Buddhoe Park at 11:00 a.m. for the official Emancipation ceremony, an event also set to be simulcast at Emancipation Garden on St. Thomas, and Slim Man's Locale on St. John.



Positive Nelson, a former senator known to promote history and culture, leads the annual Fort to Fort walk on Monday, July 3, 2023. (Credit: V.I. Consortium)

A celebratory luncheon titled "Freedom, Feast & Folklore" will be held at 1:00 p.m. on the Frederiksted Pier. The day of reflection and rejoicing will conclude with an 8:00 p.m. fireworks display and the "Unshackled Music Festival," commencing at 8:30 p.m. at Freedom City, Frederiksted's endearing moniker.

Carol Burke, chair of the Emancipation Committee, underscored the importance of the 175th commemoration as an opportunity to "reshape and reset." Reflecting on the past is as much a reminder of the journey taken by Virgin Islanders as it is a springboard to a brighter, better-defined future, Burke expressed.

Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach also emphasized the historical importance of this day. "The 2023 commemoration of Emancipation Day marks the 175th anniversary of the liberation of African people in the Danish West Indies," Roach stated. "The observance of this pivotal moment in our history, when our ancestors demanded their freedom, inspires much Virgin Islands pride."

The lieutenant governor underscored the necessity to remember the valiant actions of ancestors, who not only fought for freedom, but demanded it on their terms. He commended the ongoing efforts of Virgin Islanders today who continue the struggle for justice and equality, embodying the strength, courage, and fortitude of their African ancestors.

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