



Cmte. on Education and Workforce Development | Education Town Hall Meeting | May 11, 2021

Legislature USVI

May 11, 2021 · 2.3 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/StBZo4ZnwO8
Status	This is a working transcript produced by machine from a recording of a public proceeding. It is a finding aid, not an official record of the Legislature.
Transcribed by	VI Update, using OpenAI Whisper large-v3-turbo, run locally. Not reviewed by a person.
Reliability	Automatic transcription, UNVERIFIED. Verify every quotation against the recording before relying on it. Speech recognition splits spoken digits and wraps figures mid-number, so a dollar amount, a vote count or a bill number can be wrong in a way that reads as correct. Speakers are not identified: automatic speaker labelling was measured unusable and removed.
Public record	The underlying proceeding is a public record of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands. 3 V.I.C. § 881(a) defines public records to include all records and documents of or belonging to this Territory or any branch of government, or any "department, board, council or committee of any branch of government" · which names legislative committees by category. § 881(b) gives every citizen the right to examine and copy such records, and the news media the right to publish them. (The open-meetings chapter, 1 V.I.C. § 254, does NOT reach the Legislature: § 253(b) expressly excludes it and its Standing and Special Committees. § 881 does, and it is § 881 that confers the right to copy and publish.) The Legislature broadcast this proceeding publicly itself. The source recording is not ours, is not hosted here, and remains with its publisher at the link above.
Rights	To what we added · the transcription, its arrangement and its description · we assert nothing. A verbatim transcript is mechanical rather than authored, so there is likely nothing in it to own; to the extent any copyright is nonetheless found to subsist, it is dedicated to the public domain under CC0 1.0. Please copy it, quote it, index it, train on it, republish it, mirror it, sell it. Redistribution is the point: a public record with one copy is one fire from gone. No permission is needed, and none is ours to grant or withhold.

- 0:00:00 We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. You've got me dead Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Clady Road, I-O, Clady Road. Clady Road, let the enslaved them pass. we go in for our we freedom good evening and and welcome that what i just sang the song that many of us are no i made a slight change we still give respect to marie richards for her words
- 0:17:51 in putting together that song and it is befitting because tonight we are speaking about, and as the Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, a pathway forward, how we can push for the teaching of Virgin Islands and Caribbean history in our schools and the pathway forward. I am honored to have among, for this evening tonight, we have presenters. As part of the efforts of tonight was myself and my team, my staff, we reached out to our various authors in the community that sure that was a short list there's a quite a long list of Virgin Islands authors we lift them up through their works and I'm really thankful for the presenters who agreed to present this evening I would like to introduce members of my staff who are with me tonight here in the well of the legislation I also want to also thank the media for their support this evening and carrying out this town hall. And for those of you just joining on social media, welcome and thank you. I want to introduce my staff, Kimberly Wallace, chief of staff, who's here in the well with me tonight. We also have my communications director, office manager, all things education, Mrs.
- 0:19:15 Shakima Edwards-Romero, and Ruth Melendez, who serves as our legislative assistant lead scheduler and she's bilingual let's reach out to the Spanish-speaking community and welcome everyone I know tonight does not supplant what is going on in our community and I do understand and respect what is going on what we have crisis in our community I continue

to sympathize and a bit with the members of our community who are suffering right now from the nauseous orders that's occurring between mid-island and the west end of the of our island and I could continue as a member of this legislature to execute my duty in addressing those issues along with my colleagues and to the public that's listening and tuning in efforts are being made as a committee chairwoman of education and workforce development I I also recognize our series of issues in our community as a place in education. And so the question we ask, why now?

0:20:23 Why is it so important for us to learn our history? Right now, in our nation, we are coming to terms with the issues surrounding social justice. So a number of legislatures are, in fact, updating or enacting legislation to help address issues surrounding issues surrounding crime prevention and curriculum and how they make how they intersect as a body though here in the virgin islands we actually are well it's going to be well over three decades as in and going into 38 years that the legislature the virgin Legislature passed the law to require the teaching of Virgin Islands Caribbean history in our schools from elementary into high school. That law is found in the Virgin Islands Code title 17 section 41. And with that we have efforts to really examine our history. I am also here tonight not only as a senator but as a United Nations Fellow for the International Decade of People of African descent and this matter of our curriculum in our schools is on a global level. There are global efforts throughout where activists and scholars are uniting to really push for the transformation of our communities. Why is it so important? It is about charting a pathway through human rights education to really reshape the minds and hearts of our children and our wider community. without further ado I would like to now have my communications director we're gonna go over the overview of tonight the basic agenda and also that at this

0:22:19 time I'll have her begin the process of introducing our guest presenters this evening Shakima thank you Have a good evening everyone. Tonight we're going to be focusing on Senator Whitaker will be hosting her second town hall and we will be working a way forward for the teaching of VI and Caribbean history. We'll first begin with a welcome and introduction of staff as well as an opening statement by Senator Whitaker, an introduction of guests, an overview, as well as presentation by our guests. Invited guests tonight, we have authors, Angela Golden Bryan, Enrique Rico-Cornero, Jerron Richards, Senator Shawn Michael Malone, and Ms. Claudette Young-Hines.

0:23:17 All right, tonight our first presenter will be Ms. Claudette Young-Hines, Ms. Hines life experience in new york and chicago public housing yards two ivy league yards and beyond has a spicy seasoning of a caribbean family rooted in trinidad barbados guyana and st thomas in boston she held senior positions in community and citywide organizations relocating to the territory she was appointed to the cabinet of governor alexander farrelly and initiated the energy rebate and renewable energy grant programs numerous solar wind assessment and application projects for agriculture business and public housing the vi's first video conference facility successful regional initiatives including the 1993 and 1994 3e renewable energy environment and economics conference and trade expositions and recruited the first vi-based solar manufacturer sun trapper heinz unlimited her professional practice has provided planning management and training services to the public and private sectors and devoted a good measure to building capacity within community-based organizations at radcliffe college harvard university miss young heinz earned an interdisciplinary degree in psychology sociology and anthropology and a master's

0:25:10 degree in regional and community planning at massachusetts institute of technology she speaks today as a founding member and president of succeed welcome miss heinz good evening everyone and thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on vi history the way forward my comments are made as a caribbean woman of a certain age who has worked in the formal and informal conventional and progressive systems of education but also as president of succeed saint croix unified for community culture environment and economic development since 2006 we have championed smart growth which is an inclusive and sustainable approach to expanding the economy for us that means cultural health is a cornerstone of economic development in light of decades of inaction we developed a comprehensive approach to preserving authenticating and institutionalizing bi history and culture which can be found in the award-winning national park service report that proposed a national heritage area for saint croix As the selected coordinating entity, Succeed proposed to re-grant funds to qualified applicants and organizations to conduct inventory, review, and catalog the existing materials, gather information, prepare publications, videos, et cetera, and to build and share skills by establishing or expanding courses, training, and certification of undistorted and little known history and on traditional forms of play music and arts the way forward is to resource

0:27:02 review write rewrite as warranted and ensure seamless integration in k-12 education and all systems specific to history we must always always be clear if history is his story or ours and review and rewrite that story when it is warranted to do so europeans attended universities in timbuktu and studied in libraries in egypt but justified enslavement of savage africans research by archaeologists in university of puerto rico and in the south america have debunked the myths that caribs were cannibals but that was used to justify the genocide the historic and contemporary role of internalized oppression ought to be acknowledged and addressed through education specific to culture performance does not ensure

preservation in 1985 i conducted a six-month project with the division of cultural ed that focused culture bearers including gerard emmanuel jewel ross brathwaite willard john gina sanison and others in linking the culture they performed with methods of institutionalizing it through cultural competency in textbooks, scholarly treatment of cultural forms, or creation of materials with a long shelf life.

0:28:28 Willard John's DVD, Mokalushin, is an excellent example of the latter. In recent years, UVI's Robin Stern developed a book with her students called Say It Inclusion that makes it clear that contemporary Crucian language is now infused with words and expressions from the U.S. Jamaica and other islands and while history and culture are not static there is an imperative to know where you come from before you innovate. Eddie Russell's music is an excellent example. Eddie puts the q in quality. Hello, okay, i was getting feedback. Sorry, Eddie Russell's music is an excellent example. He puts the q in quelbay when he plays it, but when he raps quelbay around jazz or r b it is exquisite. There must be books and instruction in music classes to teach the historical backstory and to teach what it is he does other than sedel, Peterson, Christopher and Gail Watson Chang and her daughter singing in the kaiso genre is rare. There should be books and instructions in music classes on this as well. Bless Shalana Brown and her relentless efforts to revive and weave history and traditional culture into contemporary fashion. As an aside, i once asked and got no response when i asked if the 25 cents that our students pay for color clothes day could be 15 cents if it was cultural style. But there was no answer. Many restaurants serve Caribbean food but you have to search for a plate of prusion food and the recipe books are mostly out of print. The window is closing and the rapid growth of new residents is a bellwether. A human resources executive told me his wife felt they had come to southern Key West after seeing McDonald's KFC, Cinco de Mayo and hearing the blues folk and country music but no steel pan or calypso of course. After a couple months she

0:30:33 realized this wasn't Key West South and she was ready to leave. Uh, finding if history and culture are to live and thrive within this contemporary cauldron the time is now to correct misinformation. No woman ever gave birth to a slave. A woman gave birth to a child who was enslaved so the reference must be to Africans and Europeans or the enslavers and the enslaved. Time is now to institutionalize cultural knowledge. Have intramural activities like public speaking contests focused on culture and with due respect to Dr. King how about the speeches of Hubert Harrison and Virgin Islanders who helped shape the Harlem Renaissance but also consider videos at the kiosk at the airport so people can learn a little about VI history and culture while they await at the baggage claim. The elected officials in DOE have talked and talked in fits and starts since the 80s. There already exists a huge gap in passing down cultural knowledge. A professor at UBI shared that when she asked her students about folktales and adages, she got blank stares. Finally, there needs only to be the will to walk the talk.

0:31:50 Succeed's approach to the St. Croix National Heritage Area provided resources to research, rewrite, build capacity to fully integrate our story. And despite Resolution 28-0152, which was passed unanimously by the legislature in support of Succeed as the coordinating entity for the National Heritage Area, we will be replaced by the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office in a new version of the delegates congressional bill that being said rather than start from square one Shippo could reference the projects and concepts that helped garner a national award for the park service on that report and if they're unable to implement them propose a contract award to succeed to bring them to life. Alternatively it would be logical for the Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center at UVI to be given the resources to do the inventory, the publication and either training for credit or certification for teachers, administrators and others who would then be equipped to help our history and culture and be authentic and dynamic resources. Review, rewrite are the elements of the way forward but as Bronco says trust in God but lock your car. Don't drop the lawsuit. Senator Whitaker, thank you. Thank you.

0:33:20 Thank you so much, Ajwa, and I want to also just put a plug out for the organization Succeed. I am a former board member of Succeed. Also, just by way of background with Mrs. Hines, in terms of her work, she didn't put a plug in, but she's also a strategic planner. She's worked with a number of nonprofit boards and even for-profit boards to help them with strategy. One included my youth organization, the Virgin Auschwitz Advocacy Coalition, where one of Succeed had a seed project when they were working on the extensive feasibility study on our national heritage area. And so tonight also, too, as my role as a committee Chairwoman, my jurisdiction over culture, is that the work that Ajoa, Mrs. Hines, is involved with really and truly is important, and we have to lift that information up. And another time as we move forward, when we have, of course, an actual series of hearings and the like, I look forward to having Ajoa and other individuals who are involved.

0:34:32 Shekima would now, we're gonna bring up the next presenter for this evening. Thank you. Okay, our next presenter is Mr. Enrique Rico Cornero. Enrique Rico Cornero is a sixth generation Virgin Islander. Born and raised on the island of St. Thomas, he graduated from Ivana Yudora Keene High School in 1985. He is also an eight year veteran of the US Air Force he worked as an air traffic controller. Enrique graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1995 and since then

he has written and published six books about Virgin Islands history. He currently lives in Texas and was very instrumental in getting March 31st 2021 declared as Houston Virgin Islands Association day. Welcome Mr. Quineiro.

0:35:28 thank you very much everyone can you hear me fine great all right first and foremost like to thank senator whitaker for giving us this platform to all voice our concerns and also to show our support for what it is that she's trying to accomplish the the challenge before us today is not a new one uh back in 1938 jantonio jarvis saw the same thing happening he saw uh former uh citizens of the danish west indies who are now americans uh not having any resources to to go to for identifying their their history and not just u.s history danish history but also our unique virgin islands history so he published that very first book that very first textbook that we had a brief history of the virgin islands and since then there have been many others that have stepped up uh to also follow his path to try to lay the groundwork for educating our children about their their unique and incredible history and culture one of those being a mr a thurston child that published a book called our virgin islands okay and this was issued in 1939 it was probably the very first official textbook for junior high students then in 1963 the next textbook was issued called up and down the virgin islands by lillian anderson and this is the book that was used throughout the 60s and most of the 70s then finally in 1973 we had dr isaac duken publish a history of the virgin islands in the united states now those are three great pieces of work uh the only challenge is they were written about 48 years ago and one of the things that senator whitaker said when she first started was claire de road and just so happened it says claire de road a virgin islands history textbook

0:37:38 this was our most recent attempt to educate our children and that was published in 1983 it never really gained as much traction as the history of the virgin islands so what i'm going to tell you is if you do not recognize any of those four textbooks that i showed you you probably did not get virgin islands history in school you probably got uh caribbean history which we all know if you have a big textbook that says caribbean history 90 of it is going to be dedicated to the larger islands of puerto rico cuba jamaica dominican republic and you're going to have a few pages dedicated to the virgin islands so far short of what what we deserve and far short of what our children deserve now you know those are some big challenges ahead of us especially like i say when the last textbook was issued 48 years ago i find it inconceivable that a child their parent and their grandparent could possibly use the same history textbook that is just simply not acceptable okay so those are you know very large challenges however we also have some incredible opportunities in front of us access the information today is at the touch of our fingertip plenty of information is online also in 2017 when denmark released tons and tons of information we now got a much better look into our colonial history as well as our early american history also the virgin aisles is full of many talented writers including angela i see her her beautiful face on the screen here and i do have your books angela by the way um and then finally in this day and age we have

0:39:25 publishing and e-publishing of books easier and quicker than ever before so getting something put together and being able to update it to have the most accurate and current information for our children is more affordable than it's ever been and easier than it's ever been and also the fact that our kids now are so well versed in using tablets and things of that nature getting the information to them is our responsibility they're ready to receive it we just have to put it in their hands and like i said in the beginning 48 years it's long overdue it's a great textbook but 48 years is long overdue and with that being said again thank you for the opportunity and uh look forward to hearing the rest of our speakers and answering questions from from the panel and the the guests thank you very much mr canary i want to and throughout this evening share a few quotes and i want to um also thank you well thank you again mr canero we i did have my office and i we met with mr romero and i met with mr canario because one of the efforts that um is being made in terms of stakeholders one of the efforts i'm making as a senator is to reach out to develop a list of stakeholders as i as i make efforts to address the curriculum in our school i just also want to put out that i have engaged the department education commissioner barry benjamin over the matter of these series of authors who have works that i would like to see implemented and works that would be many works that we turned into actual textbooks and curriculum. Thank you. There's a quote I would like to share. It's a quote I often share. I also shared it in my 100-day report. Young people should be at the forefront

0:41:24 of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all our young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies. The former UN Secretary General and the late Kofi Annan. So Shaquem will now read the next presenter as we make our way to our list of presenters. Thank you and if you're just tuning in again, this is Senator Genevieve Whitaker presenting today as for my office in support of the efforts for the teaching of Virgin Islands and Caribbean history, and I would even just add, teaching of human rights history and education in our schools. Thank you.

0:42:15 Hakeemah, thank you. All right, our next presenter is Mr. Jerron Richards. Jerron Richards is a teacher at the St. Croix Central High School. He is also an author of a book containing Virgin Islands history entitled Roots at a Beobab. He

enjoys working with the youth and being a leader mentor to the younger generation. Welcome Mr. Richards. Good evening one and all.

0:42:46 Can everyone hear me clearly? Alrighty. So I am very delighted to be here today. I'd first like to thank Senator Whitaker for inviting me to this timely meeting. I say it's timely because it is more than ever necessary at this time to speak on such a topic. I'm a firm believer that education liberates the mind, but a cultural education liberates the soul. As an educator myself, teaching for about three years in the public school system, I've been able to witness the level of inspiration children receive when their education is culturally relevant. Students are not only captivated and engaged in the lesson material, but they also tend to comprehend more. Referring to Act number 4844, which mandates a Virgin Islands curriculum within our school systems, it is clear that there's been many violations to this law. Our children are deprived of a knowledge of who they are, the legacy of their ancestors, and the overall connection of them to the continent of Africa.

0:43:53 Now, how is Virgin Islands history being taught in schools, one may ask. the main instrument that is being utilized in the public school system to teach virgin island's history is the umbilical cord which is a book written by the honorable judge harold willox and published in the year 1995. i came across this book within my years of high school at the saint croix educational complex and it wasn't one that fully caught my attention it just seemed like a book of facts yes it's a great book with valid information and can be used as an instrument to teach virgin islands history but it should not be the only resource available there are a number of cultural educational resources that can be incorporated into the curriculum there are authors such as myself who are reading books pertaining to virgin islands history and culture but they are not available to the students of the virgin islands the average public school student states that the only time they're introduced to the history of the virgin islands is within their high school years this is simply because there is a mandatory virgin islands history class students take for about a semester once they've advanced from the class they are no longer required to learn more of their history it's something like dipping the feet of our children into water but not allowing them to swim our history here in the virgin islands is rich one that is widespread and cannot be taught within a semester much less a year of high school now what are some of the solutions to these deficiencies in our curriculum here in the virgin islands one may ask for one educational stakeholders may seek to incorporate more of the performing arts within our public schools students can take part in activities related to the genres of music dance storytelling and drama students can act out various historical events which will help them to not only comprehend but also remember their history through active engagement these activities should not be limited to the month of march virgin islands history month but should be incorporated throughout the school year secondly more resources from virgin island

0:46:12 authors should be made available to our students. Some of these authors include myself with my book Roots of the Baobab, Mario Moorhead and his recently published book Crujan Dialogues, Richard Schrader Sr. and his plethora of books on Virgin Islands history, Dr. Valdemar Hill Sr. and his book entitled Rise to Recognition, Professor Marilyn Krieger's book entitled Race Relations in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and former professor Salih Adeyemi and his book entitled engaging freedom's journey to name a few the resources mentioned are a minor amount of the many books written by virgin islanders and people from the caribbean about virgin islands history members of the board of education as well as the department of education should be working actively to assure that these resources are available to the students of the virgin islands To the listening audience, we have the resources available. We have the law mandating Virgin Islands history be taught, but what we don't have are the lawmakers and educational stakeholders who will actively enforce that law. Thank you for your time.

0:47:23 Thank you, Mr. Richards, and yet another, you know, before this town hall, and I'm so proud of him because he represents the youngest, you know, one of the younger authors in our community who are putting together works, and he did present me with his works, and I thank him for that. him for the work he's doing as also as a young educator and engaging with our office in addition to you know to mr. Conner and miss Hines we have individuals who are supporting the office in a sense we have had meetings engagements and I look forward and the last point that mr. Richards made because they see talked about his connection because right now he's working he's not here on behalf of the Department of Education he's here in individual capacity, but he's expressing some of the statements and feelings and expressions of the students who he's working with. And that is really true.

0:48:29 It's that in our schools, you have a required textbook, but in terms of the last statement he made about what's going on in terms of the advocacy, there is a lot of moving parts going on. say today actually I took part in a three-and-a-half what's your four-hour workshop though there's three-hour workshop that was scheduled as part of the Department of Education's effort through a council that has been put together to address overall curriculum and during that process I expressed the importance of involving more stakeholders as we make our way forward the teaching of Virgin Islands and Caribbean history we will see transformation. And one of the things we have to work harder on too is on the Caribbean component.

Is Virgin Islands history being taught to a level? The answer is yes. What about Caribbean history? Some of us, myself included, we're fortunate to have had Virgin Islands and Caribbean history through certain teachers. Mrs. DeMond was my ninth grade teacher at St. Joseph and we were immersed into Virgin Islands Caribbean history deep into Virgin Islands and Caribbean history knowing all the Caribbean islands and the geography and the the politics behind and the connections interconnections and so as we look forward to really restructuring our curriculum so that even our little ones our little preschoolers will learn about their history and by time every students reached high school they're studying Virgin Islands Caribbean literature African literature world literature that is comprehensive and so there is a global movement we may not hear about it it's not well reported because our media we have to work with our media to get information out in terms of the our

0:50:18 local media but there is a global effort and I'm proud to say that I am part of that and I look forward to more being part of the global effort the global social justice effort for the teaching and the restructuring of history curriculum throughout the world. Thank you so much, Mr. Richards. This is Romero. Shekima will bring up, we'll read the, have the next presenter, call up the next presenter. Thank you. Our next presenter is Ms. Angela Golden-Brien. Ms. Brian, would you mind providing us with a brief background of yourself thank you yes thank you so much thank you so much uh senator whitaker for the invitation and i say this not with any type of false humility however i am extremely humbled to be in the presence of these panelists who have articulated so eloquently the dilemma that we face today and so i must say as part of my background i'm a newcomer to this in terms of of writing and putting to to paper uh some of our history as well as uh documenting it through the form of a documentary as well my experience is i grew up in the virgin islands went to saint claudomarcos saint patrick saint joseph and i don't remember a whole lot i couldn't identify any of those books that you presented but i'm writing down it's like wow and so a large part of what i'm doing is being a part of the diaspora as well from i almost feel like i'm from the outside looking in and i saw after having written my books particularly on the fire burn thinking wow how do i get these into the school system because i'd heard that there is a need

0:52:16 there there wasn't any streamlined type of process to do so and I met with lots of frustration but yet I kept hearing there is a need for this this is something that is important however it's been a few years and I've made phone calls I've done visits and everything so I I cannot articulate it any better than what has been said already that there there needs to be that uh that that seamless integration and the process of bringing this into the school system and for me what i can say is after sitting at the feet of my aunties and listening to the story it became so much more powerful so much more real and so as we bring this to our children the younger the better to instill that sense of cultural pride because we're getting everybody else's history i got everyone else's history i looked at the island i saw people that looked like me but when i looked in the books i didn't unless they were in chains or something and there was a brief period of time and so for me how how can i help this process you know what can i do to move this forward i do definitely continue uh plan on continuing to write and research and definitely connect with people like the other panelists that have been in the trenches that know what's really going on. So I'm coming from, I believe, a different perspective as a relatively new artist.

0:53:46 I've been raising kids and survival for so long. Now I'm an empty nest. It's like I have time to create finally. So I would love to really get in the trenches, find out what can I do, create more tools for education, for cultural preservation, because it's so important. And there's a statement that Mr. Richards made about what that does for a kid. So, I'm speaking from the heart. I don't have a piece of paper, which I wish that I did to have been more eloquent, but really that's what I'm bringing is that as a newcomer, I'd like to find a way, how can this be streamlined as you bring in the other artists, there are so many. do you have the the artists that have been there the writers that have been there for from the very beginning how do you get their books into the school system and so that is about it for me and i thank you once again for the opportunity i'm looking forward to seeing how i can be of service to help move this process forward thank you thank you so much angela and you are so humble because you're also going to speak to your recent awards. Please put that on the record, Angela, the two, the most recent awards. I want you to express that.

0:55:13 Okay. Well, great. Thank you. Well, for our documentary, Fireburn, the screenplay, we did receive the best documentary short at the Chicago Indie Film Awards. And my book did receive one of the the best caribbean history books of all time with the children's book uh my adult book was an amazon number one bestseller so it i'm just i'm just grateful to be used in whatever way that i can and i think it's a beginner's luck really but um you know i'm humbled i'm honored and it's definitely my intention to to continue moving forward and as we talk about the the human rights you know definitely that's a huge component of uh what i'm doing because i this is the the abuse of human beings and so my children's book also incorporates a strong anti-bullying message as well so thank you thank you and i'm i probably own two of your books and and that's one thank you and we continue to lift up our authors and what can and and angela asked a very good question how can she be of assistance getting her books as well into our schools i when we think about the how our virgin islands um library on public libraries can can really you know have a lot of these works in which actually even at you know diversity of virgin islands we have our public libraries for which why there's so much efforts right now to get them

restored especially here in St. Croix where both of them we have one the at the Peterson library and Fredger said and the Lawrence Williams library and Christian said the Peterson library has been largely shuttered and of course as many know the Florence Williams library has gone through a lot of issues with the infrastructure so imagine now as we reimagine our libraries our school-based libraries and to see many of the works of the

0:57:11 authors here tonight and other authors and also to how I also engage with Angela. Angela, it's also involved United Nations efforts, United Nations in Florida, and we share a connection in that way. We didn't meet when I was in the USA in Tampa, Florida, but also just to highlight that there are a number of Virgin Islanders also who are activists who are making differences on an international level. And you may not always hear their stories, but they're doing great work. So again, I thank you very much, Angela, for all the work that you do and all the work that is set to be done as we engage in the Department of Education, the university, our private and public schools, engaging with the principals, the headmasters, and to do that. I want to, right before going to our next presenter, thank you so much, Angela, to speak about, I want to highlight something really important as it pertains to legislation and highlighting really why it's so important. So we have, it was put out by the, This is the National Conference of State Legislatures blog.

0:58:18 It was an article, a recent article, on implementing racial justice curriculum and standards. And it reads, it's by Benjamin Oldneck Brown. And just a quick summary of the article, and I'll read directly. Increased efforts to examine state standards promoting racial equity, oppose implicit bias, and encourage curriculum that recognizes the contributions of minority groups and the complex history and impact of racism in the United States are circulating the nation's legislatures. Nevada, California, Washington, Indiana, Nebraska, Virginia, Massachusetts, Illinois, among those states. I, for three years of my life, actually lived in the state of Maryland, Montgomery County and even back in, that would be in the 90s, you did in fact have the requirement that children in the elementary school, children in school learn the history of Maryland as an example. And we did take trips to Annapolis, the capital, where we saw historical elements of oppression, oppression, right? A lot of the slave, enslaved quarters and the like. And many of us are aware that the history of the Holocaust is well taught. But how much, how many of our children know about African history? And what's also important to note, we didn't start as people of African descent as slaves. We had kingdoms, religion, all that was stolen, taken away from us so we do not begin our history with enslavement we start the history as it should be started when we get to a point as a world community on the Virgin Islands having its role our history our history books are going to reflect just that the history of the world not one person one man's one one's racist history the history of the world Europe as an as a continent and European nations are benefiting now from their leaders who in fact are pushing for in the curriculum of many European governments the teaching of history and reparations and the like and that's a whole nother conversation a whole nother

1:00:43 topic we can get to when talk about reparations so I'll take this opportunity now of course to we'll bring up our next presenter okay our next presenter is Senator Shawn Michael Malone Senator Mike Shawn Michael Malone was born August 29th 1968 and raised on St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands. Senator Malone is an outstanding decorated public servant who was elected to the U.S. Virgin Islands legislature for six consecutive terms serving from 2003 to 2015. His recent achievements on behalf of the people of the territory include the Virgin Islands Smoke Free Act, which serves to protect untold numbers of patrons and employees from secondhand smoke by banning tobacco in restaurants and bars. Protecting public health and the environment have been important aspects of Senator Malone's legislative career, and he has been instrumental in preserving island beaches, air quality, and waters. His legislative efforts include changing local laws to increase the number of senators needed to approve major coastal zone management permits senator malone has also focused on education and is the founder of the reading to achieve learning program offering incentives for students to improve their reading and comprehension skills currently senator malone is president of the Bartlett Group LLC a political and Government Strategy Consulting Firm. Welcome, Senator Malone.

1:02:28 got it no you can hear me can anyone hear me now i can hear you i think hello yes we can hear you ah fantastic okay so i'm clear and i can hear you now i think yes correct Okay, so I'll just continue it up.

1:03:49 to continue the conversation of developing all people as a place with an identity to continue educating all people about what and who we are. This should never stop just because we have other things that we're dealing with. I want to commend Senator Whitaker for her leadership. This is important because you know this issue has been around for quite some time even when i was serving the senate if somebody doesn't take the mantle like get other leaders to focus on this issue it will never happen so you ought to be commendable for seeing it through sticking with it in your first term it's not going to be easy because people are you know again there's challenges of they're getting other players who are integral in realize what we're trying to accomplish here at the table focused and committed to finally ending the story about providing the right types of literature education for our people to know about who we are where we were where we would like to go i would say uh in brief without going into too much detail so we can have more discussion i would like

to see a very clear strategy in how we can really bring those persons who have to be the ones to implement a lot of this at a table even if it means for senator whitaker to draft legislation to introduce legislation to organize a focus group or a committee of some sort include that will involve those persons in education um you know the university whatever to come up with a strategic plan how they're going to integrate to introduce into the curriculum including procurement of materials literature and over a particular period of time how we're going to finally stop as asking a question when

1:05:53 are we going to have vi history taught at every level in every part of our school system okay as a student of political science as also a politician um working government for many years i understand very well the importance of identity politics it is critical to economic social and political advancement it's that simple well not really but you know this is really what how you benefit when people know and understand who they are it gives them the confidence the knowledge to understand what our limitations are what our weaknesses are our strengths we can use those to leverage them to advance the society generation after generation and we seem to find ourselves back and forth trying to understand what to do with the obvious that needs to be done okay so i am very interested in this town hall to see a strategy a focus strategy uh we can talk about and help to develop one perhaps to mandate some action now okay we're talking a lot there people have books who want to introduce there's been attempts in the past but now the senate can be the leader with senator whitaker at the helm her chair of the committee of the education committee to say in legislation we must at this day and time by this time produce this plan how we're going to do x y and z to make sure it's completely saturated on all levels with material

1:07:43 literature whatever even training for teachers because teachers would have to be trained and how how to impart this very important knowledge about the virgin islands its people in the past and i like what you said senator whitaker not from slavery but from before okay and help energize and empower the young people and current generations of course to move forward with confidence in the future okay we we have to be more proactive and more um um strategic um in focusing on this very important idea because if we don't uh let's end with this the consequences i won't say dire but they're not beneficial for the for the body politic of the territory you know the people who live there whether you are from the Virgin Islands or not there is it's important that the place has a strong sense of identity people who come to there, those who are from there, understand what this place is about, why it ticks, what is going, and so everybody can participate in the development of a very viable future for everybody who wants to participate in it, okay? It's not rocket science to understand its importance. In fact, let me just make a quick announcement before i close and then open up, you know, listen to other people. Tomorrow, the U.S. Congress, for example, this is a part of a wider discussion of our political status or direction as a uh a territory say colony in this day and age tomorrow the congress for the first time will be hearing issues regarding the insular the famous insular cases of the supreme court back in that circa 1900 that involved of why the virgin islands puerto rico other places even the philippines at the time

1:09:41 um were designated as territories and how to refer to the inhabitants of these islands as less than human it's amazing it's documented and it's very good to see and since uh Councilman Plaskett is involved in this and she made comments about to this discussion as well as Virgin Islands can understand that part of our history that explains what we are today why we are where we are and why it's so difficult to see us move ahead when it really shouldn't be as because we have more participation on the federal level so another discussion but it's important to know that tomorrow that is going to be taking place and i was forward to you senator whitaker the information so you can promote it on your page so that people who are interested in tuning into the hearing can listen to the discussion is it's very important to the political future of the virgin islands as we also discuss our historical uh background and things that we need to do to have students and just regular citizens understand the territory completely in so this is not just about school it's also ways to involve or have access by other citizens about who we are in our libraries etc we could discuss a number of different ways through technology internet facebook etc how we can understand who we are and where we were how we got where we are so that we can understand how we would like to move forward in the future okay so i present myself today to be a part of this on how to discuss this and again i want to see some kind of um a very clear strategy as to what we got some kind of action plan that's what i was looking for an action plan after this meeting through some maybe for me legislation made the best way because it

1:11:30 makes people pay attention and it gives direction from one branch to the next to act to do something with a specific time period to produce some kind of report to the senate uh so when they're going to begin how they're going to do it much money is needed to do it so we could end the story once and for all and with senator weddick's leadership i'm sure we can start to make some serious progress a movement forward finally again in this area thank you thank you thank you senator malone uh it is um an honor to have you uh it's also as a as a freshman senator it's always good to have well first off i mean just looking at it from perspective of mentorship here we have um who's running this evening a former senator who was quite involved senator malone was a bit he didn't put it out there, but he was also a huge supporter of reparations. I was very involved. I was a former legal counsel of the Virgin Islands reparations movement, and he was quite supportive

of the movement, as well as Senator Malone is the sponsor of the legislation responsible for the establishment of Virgin Islands History Month, which is March. Senator Malone provides us with an important mandate and as my colleagues as I worked engagement I have submitted legislation which regarding a reporting requirement for the Department of Education but what Senator Malone is speaking about is even a more robust so my to elevate my bill draft into actual legislation with his support and others who even are in part of this meeting tonight this town hall and all those those of you in the public, because we have tuned in tonight on the live, we have teachers, you know, educators, others, students, you know, themselves to engage, and a lot of stakeholders.

1:13:20 And I agree, putting together a framework so that we have a reporting, we have working sessions. Like I said, today was a three-hour working session on Department of Education as I was invited to the council that's dealing with curriculum, but that's overall curriculum. but as we get more tactile and we get more, we get a lot more driven, I can say that I'm going to likely be giving, be able to help with that action plan for about a couple years now. I've actually put together a blueprint as part of my own personal level that I look forward to sharing because in that blueprint actually it's an actual laid out plan that's been well vetted and I look forward to even using that as an example as a and it's really was known as a blueprint for change on my background in drafting plans and things of that nature I look forward to let's put some legislation together and working with the stakeholders because what I think is going to be really important on what earlier today one of the earlier presenters Mr. Cornero was talking about what he learned especially and Senator Malone has also highlighted what he has learned as has Mrs. Hines, Mrs. Bryan, Mr. Richards, all speaking about different parts, of course different ages and experiences with learning history, is that even what was learned in the past wasn't sufficient, or there were issues with the content. And even now we suffer the same. Right now in our school system, I'll put out there very clearly, the workbooks that are out there right now are not sufficient. I myself had a chance to go through some of those workbooks. Good work has been done, but more work needs to be had. We're not going to continue to teach our children that the missionaries or the, or Von Schulten was a good person, you know, that's not the truth, okay? We have to teach our children the truth about what happened

1:15:13 and what happened even before slavery to inspire them to be greater than they are in terms of what they see around them if they live in communities where they see a lot of brokenness. So thank you so much, Senator Malone, and I look forward to a continued working relation and your support, and others, and even other former senators who share this same interest in history and culture. And I know when we think about, okay, how, because most people will step back and say, okay, what is this, how does it relate to my day-to-day, my bread and butter I will say that when we see when we when Virgin Islands Caribbean history is fully taught and when our children learn human rights and humanity we will see a change because it's about the psychological warfare that's going on but we have children learning through curriculum or what they're not learning and what they're not being inspired to become so we're gonna work to shift the narrative thank you so much and so and I think yes And we come to, we're going to go on to the next segment of the, I think, that's everyone, right? Shakima, keep me on task. We did, and I asked that question because I actually invited, just want to indicate, I want to thank everyone who also responded because we did reach out to various authors as well.

1:16:35 We indicated their support, and I look forward to having a follow-up. So we'll now move on to the next part of our program. Shakima. All right, so we're looking at some of our comments from the town hall, and we have a comment from Sharon Honoré, I'm sorry if I'm mispronouncing your name, but she said, might a committee be created to submit books by VI authors to the Library of Congress? She believes that the primary qualification is that the book be published within the United States. Thank you, and so I agree, that's a great comment. Thank you very much, Thank you very much, Ms. Honore, Professor Honore. I think that is a very good suggestion.

1:17:21 And just to even highlight a number of our works, a number of our historical works are also in libraries, to include the Library of Congress, and I think that would be really excellent to go through. And I did have some initial discussions regarding that process, because this time around when we put together the publications and the works and in some cases we'll actually be looking to republish books because there are a number of works that took place in the 70s and 80s here in the virgin islands and they were buried for reasons unknown to me but that's um what happened in our history so although that comment is well well received any other comments that we want to share in terms of any oh yes um yes go ahead yes uh the wonderful Both Marvin Williams and Edgar Lake used to do an incredible job of presenting the many, many Virgin Islanders who were central to the writing in the Harlem Renaissance. Many that, you know, folks are not even, again, I talked about undisclosed or undistorted and unknown history. So, in addition to the books that Mr. Cornero brought up, and Dr. Honoré had asked in her chat whether anyone who mentioned the book could please write those books on the Facebook line so she can get them to make sure that they have them there at UVI for her classes.

1:19:01 um but the amount of literature and that's why one of the things succeed said is we need we would like to support an inventory an assessment of the extensive amount of work that has been done recognized and unrecognized by virgin

islanders there are videos there are books. When I did the work with Cultural Ed in 85, I was amazed at the information that Gina Sanneson and Yagen Haptis and Kwame Garcia and other folks were able to bring as written publications that were gathering dust somewhere. And so it's important to get the full scan, an environmental scan of what exists but then we have to review it with the researcher's eye because there's a lot of distorted history there's an african proverb about how when the when the hunter tells the story about the lion the lion's always the bad guy the hunter wins okay when it's his story it's not necessarily our story and as wayne james so famously said the 400 years of enslavement is a footnote in the history of we africans in the diaspora let's remember europeans went to timbuktu to learn geometry and to learn algebra and to learn writing you know hippocrates went to egypt and studied with him hope tip but in you know hippocrates is considered the father of medicine in history so we also have to look at what's written with an eye towards authenticity and researching it we all most of us grew up thinking the caribs were cannibals well hello the professors the archaeologists and anthropologists at university of puerto rico and in south america debunked that myth so i'll stop there there's an extensive amount of written material as well as oral history that still needs to be collected and documented and that must be done post haste thank you so

1:21:26 much for those words as well well received correct because it's a whole effort that that's set to be made we have a lot of written work we have we look back to a lot of the historical works, the works that are coming forward, even as I'm aware, the United Nations, the UNESCO, they put together a lot of volumes and volumes as an effort was made from, you know, 30 years ago as well, the 70s and so 80s, where an effort was made to compile a lot of African history. And so with that, we have a number of Virgin Islanders who have had huge impacts on the diaspora. What was eye-opening for me was during my fellowship at the UN Fellowship was receiving our encyclopedia, which is part of the end of our fellowship, where Edward Wilmot Blyden was then Danish-West Indian, which is now St. Thomas. he is considered to be the father of Pan-Africanism, but how much is that reflected even in Virgen's curriculum? How is that reflected in US curriculum, in the whole national curriculum, and in the global curriculum? Whereas, of course, a number of the African nations that he had influenced, especially West African nations, lift him up, and some of his descendants have also been involved in humanity works in terms of education and the like. So I say all that to say we have to lift up our people from who have made great impacts, whether we're talking about the Renaissance, the list goes on and on.

1:23:12 And so it's now to lift up their works, get it into the hearts and minds of our children, our members of our community. And it's a learning process for all of us. I mean, unless you're a historian, and even if you're a historian, it's still a learning process. So I look forward to a robust community engagement various town halls and I want to lift up also the fact that we have culture efforts going on we do have a number of USVI festivals a problem of tourism you see at first being made I acknowledge those but it's about now making it more robust and so that it's now we're having our VI Freedom Week properly acknowledge our July 3rd emancipation acknowledge you know and so we have to you know move forward in that regard thank you so now move on I'll be living All right, we have another comment by Dawn Benjamin O'Brien. She states that Caribbean and VI history should begin in elementary school. Thank you very much for that, Mrs. O'Brien. And that is correct.

1:24:14 That's what is so important we had tonight. One of our presenters, Mr. Richards, pointed that out as a point that, you know, most students are only receiving or taking a required course in high school, and we know that's not sufficient. We know that's not sufficient. And so, and even to that, it's a textbook on virgin health history, so we still miss out the component of Caribbean history. Any other comments?

1:24:51 Ms. O'Brien also stated that she believes that it should include hiking and other field trips and getting to basically know the island, the islands. Yeah, definitely. And I, you know, some of us can reflect on growing up, the hiking, exploring an island is so important. That is happening to a level, but yes, more robust. We have a lot of efforts, Dr. Lassie Davis, Lassie Davis who was also involved with the organization Succeed for which Ajwa is the president and founder and so you have you know individuals who have been engaged in those efforts but if it becomes now a part of the curriculum in the sense that now it's you know a requirement and it's students are going out there hiking and with that process too is the the fact that we have to restore historical sites.

1:25:50 And so to that end, efforts are being made. I am proud to, as a liaison to the Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs, I have already supported through letters of support two important efforts, one involving a nonprofit organization that is seeking to obtain OIA, Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs funds, to start projects surrounding restoration of historical properties in the town areas here on st croix and with that promoting workforce development education architect architectural education and the like uh the department of public works reached out to me for a project they're looking to help restore various cemeteries in our communities throughout the virgin islands on and while that you know how we pay respect to our our daily beloved who have passed um through that project um and to help support that so there's some some there's some activities going on right now by way of that and and in case of ajwa mrs hines um

engaged right now with lobbying efforts um regarding succeeds um long-standing support and efforts to regarding the national heritage area and she's also asking for your support as well and you know i mean the books and stuff are important one of the other key elements in succeeds approach to the national heritage area was being able to document traditional games and songs and arts having teachers and others be taught how you know these games were played how the arts were done and that's got to be part of what we're losing you know it's it's great for people to want to play soccer okay um but there was nothing more beautiful than watching children thread a maple okay physical activity when

1:27:55 everybody's having screen time is absolutely you know our traditional games and practices also provide physical activity so in addition to you know us talking about authenticating history and blah blah blah we and cataloging all of this literature and stuff we talked about let's make sure we document traditional games and music and crafts and arts and then institutionalize them not just by performing them again when willard john took his moco jambi um practice profession and included the history and backstory of moco jambi with all the stuff about actually doing it that dvd is gonna live can live forever okay it his performing it wouldn't necessarily even though he's teaching other children maybe the children would continue maybe they wouldn't so the whole part of of we say the way forward is provide the resources so that we can review what exists research what else could be there and what's authentic create the capacity building and skills building and skills transfer and put it in not just k through 12 through the entire everything we do our history is 365 days a year it's not one month and so you go to some islands and once a month everybody wears cultural dress okay or once a week it's it's not just a carnival okay but it's part of people's consciousness and folks aren't concerned about cultural appropriation hey if i move here and you know i respect and appreciate madras and a head tie you know that's my way of honoring your culture you know i'm not gonna you know we don't beat somebody up because they put on a madras head tie but what we're saying is it's 365 days a year

1:30:07 it's seamlessly integrated throughout the society like i said when people are waiting for that baggage at the airport let them see a video with the kiosk that introduces them to virgin islands culture because you know we say when in rome do as the romans do well You can't get vexed at them if they wear a tongue into the bank because we ain't tell them they got to, you know, she had no mother. She come in the bank like that. But if we ain't tell her here, you don't come into the bank like that, you can't be vexed. So we have to tell our story and we can do it visually and digitally throughout. And I ask the question, whether the lawsuit.

1:30:52 I mean, I appreciate Senator Malone talking about the committee or whatever, but we've been there and done that. This is 30 years. There's been a lawsuit now to get this curriculum integrated, to get the Department of Education to do what the heck they were supposed to do by law. So, like I said, let's do all this other stuff, but if the lawsuit is still in place, keep it going. because if you don't put people's hands to the fire and maybe throw in some civil disobedience 30 years from now we're going to be still talking about virgin islands history thank you for that and that's a good good way to segue correct there there comes a time when you have to you know light the fire um in what's going on and um and as there's awareness um i i'm very open about that there is a lawsuit in court and just to put it out there as senators we can in fact when a when we find individuals can do that senators can do that um if we find that we've come to a point where we have to take a matter of legislation to court is it it has definitely been done I want to also um uh have um Mr. Canary has a next up I want to also have allow the presenters to also provide some comments and as we go between social media and the presenters mr cornero thank you yeah i want to make sure that i save enough time to have plenty of uh questions uh from our guests because feedback is tremendously important but i also heard a couple of good things that i wanted to kind of uh chime in on um i personally have a virgin islands book collection of over 500 books so that's something that i've amassed over the last 30 plus years and i also know that the virgin islands is filled with talented writers

1:32:52 and authors and storytellers and craftsmen and stuff like that so i i have no doubt whatsoever that we can put something outstanding together um so i also love the idea of not just having a book but somehow incorporating uh like they were saying um uh field trips and stuff like that because you can read 10 books but if you've never been to the annaberg plantation on saint john you just don't get it uh until you've been to to christian stead and and see you know the fort and and the scale house and steeple house and stuff like that you have no idea what you're missing uh until you've been on main street in saint thomas or megan's bay you just don't get it and unfortunately many uh people in the virgin islands you you may be born on one island and have never visited the other you know i know lots of people from saint croix that have never been to saint john and a lot of people from St. Thomas that have never been to St. Roy, you know, so it's very important that we have the right educational material in place, but at the same time, don't lose sight of the importance of actually physically, like you said, getting down and dirty. You know, if you've never seen a Mokojumbi, you know, until you see one in person, you don't get it, you know. So it's one of those things where yes it's great to have a great book put together but there's much more to it than just a book and with that being said i i have a actually something that i put put together earlier this year it's a book called virgin island storytellers and no i'm not selling my book but what i'm letting you know is that in the book it lists over a hundred authors from the virgin islands detailing over 200 works that they put

together everything from educating young children to people junior high age to college scholars so the material is out there uh it's just that we've never really compiled it and put it together in a format where it can be easily uh consumed but like i say the talent is there the material is there uh it's just a matter we we got to just really take the bull by the horns and and make this thing happen so with that being said please feel free to uh send more questions our way we're looking forward to being a resource for you guys so just ask away no question is a bad question yeah i'd like to add on to that totally the the importance of that hands-on experiential

1:35:29 activity i remember growing up and there's so many things that i did not get to see simply because my mom she she didn't have the resources and after working for you know all day long and and being tired and whatnot. And so I know a lot of families, they are like survival, let's just do this. And they may not see that as important, but absolutely to be able to, you know, to walk the, to see these sites and whatnot, absolutely that very exciting. And plus it helps to address the learner, the one who's more visual, then you'll have the auditory, you'll have the smell and I'm getting excited.

1:36:11 I'm even thinking, hey, they have to learn to cook you know traditional meals i'm like let's just go all in but yeah it's it's the culture as well as the history and that cultural preservation so hey bring on the food too all right just to piggyback on what everyone said we have a comment from keema loving she stated student exchange program between the islands for a week a month or a quarter depending on age thank you so much Ms. Lovin, and a number of folks who know Ms. Lovin, her mom, Ms. Lovin, who has written a number of works as well. So we have, it's so great to have you on as well, her daughter on. Well said, a lot of the exchanges among students is so important. I know that, for example, when I, Graffiti Street, the teen talk show that's put on by WTJX, they in fact do a lot of those kinds of exchanges, and this conversation even dovetails into efforts surrounding restoring the Virgin Islands Commission on Youth, and that's as the governor to execute that along with the Senator's assistance, and also the Legislative Youth Advisory Council, which is the Youth Senate, because out of that we will have a number of initiatives where we can definitely have our youth engaged, and those exchanges are so important as we build communities and engage the students. Right now, the students do so through sports, and it's so important that we continue to support our students at this time, too. We think about history, a number of our, a wide array, right, of virgin elders right now who are just making us so proud, right, a lot of, you know, whether it's in the horse racing arena, in the basketball, baseball, you know, Olympics, all different, you know, sports of you know just amazing and so we think about history it's not just correct about what's written in the book but it's a lot of these it's what's happening around us we make history all the time and so it would be really wonderful to see how we can have a lot more student exchanges build up our and one thing it's also important to this process is to see the restoration on the building of statues when I saw the bus of King Christian go down I myself and other social media activists and activists even outside of social media long push for that you know we talk about removal of these images of oppression and replacing them with the right images as well so as our students traverse throughout the Virgin Islands they're visiting sites exchanging with each other we're building up institutions and putting money I know it comes at a cost we know this and but it's going to be really important that we start to lift up our our key figures all now a number of our historic sites are you know shuttered or they're not you know not in good shape but let's step back as a people and visualize beyond what we're going through right now with so many issues with our recovery but a virgin islands that that looks different right that even from you know a historical point we have various histories happening in terms of places to go recreation this you know just really and even when I think about intergenerational connections some of the of our elders teaching some of the young ones different games and the like and then different foods and that's happening to a level but I'll you know just making it more robust and through even through curriculum all right one of our comments

1:39:57 from Vivian Griot. She stated, games using VI trivia can be made and used as a teaching tool and made fun while learning. Thank you, Narita. Thank you very much for that comment, Ms. Griot. Thank you for joining. Thank you everyone for being on. Any other comments? Ms. Greer also stated a separate book is needed just for the history of all the great athletes. Yes, exactly, and we actually, well, the legislation has already been passed about the establishment of a Virgin Islands History Museum, and we can visualize in that museum having a sports section, and you are correct. I don't know if anyone, any of our presenters who are online may be able to answer that, And even today there was a, I took part, myself and my staff members took part in the Virgin Islands Sports Commission meeting where they're working on establishing standards for the commission itself. Any comments that anyone the presenter wanted to make for that suggestion? Mr. Connera, am I even pointing?

1:41:12 Yes, yeah, this is Rico Connera here. I think you told me about that. Working with a number of individuals on the Virgin Islands Sports Hall of Fame. So they're actually about as far along in the process as we are right now trying to establish a new textbook. Basically, there have been well over 100 athletes from the Virgin Islands that have gone on to play professional sports, believe it or not. Right now, there's about eight different people that have won Olympic medals. Everyone from Darryl Holmes, who's a fencer, like a swordsman, to Megan Hodge, a volleyball player, to even, of course, Tim Duncan, who won basketball medal, but he won it for the United States. Just tons of Virgin Islands athletes,

and like I said, we're well on our way right now working on the Sports Hall of Fame, and the same passion that I see that that group have, this same group has. So I look forward to seeing big things happen in the Virgin Islands on both fronts here in the very near future.

1:42:13 In an earlier incarnation, in doing training with the taxi ambassador program for Mabel Maduro back some years ago, one of the things that taxi drivers on both islands, we talked about how they could enhance their experience experience for visitors, but it would also work for locals. There are people who travel just to see the schools that athletes went to or to pass by the homes where people went to. We have world championship boxing belts. We have Super Bowl ring. We have NBA rings. We have Kentucky Derby.

1:43:00 i mean we every major sport this incredible little territory of a hundred thousand people has sent people we've had we've had a dina brown did the luge luge luge in the in the olympics yes my auntie i mean you know we we so the idea i mean sports tourism again was one of the things that Succeed was hoping to help, you know, provide funds to the, like this organization that's going to do the Hall of Fame Museum. It was not Succeed's intention to do this stuff.

1:43:40 There are organizations and individuals who are already doing it or can do it better. So the idea was to make sure they get the resources to do it. So connected to this Hall of Fame, it would be great for there to be tours whether it's a walking tour or a tour in a taxi for our students for our adults like angela who said she didn't get to see a lot of sites when she was little and then of course for the visitors sports term is is big there are people who travel just to see churches we have the oldest i believe the oldest synagogue in the western hemisphere is in st thomas okay um so we've got historical churches uh bill taylor did an excellent book on the churches just before hugo so there's so much of our story to tell that's why the national park service said not just christian stead not just frederick stead but the whole island of saint croix is an abundance of culture history heritage archaeology environment that the world should know about and so um hopefully mr cornyero if shippo gets if this bill goes through congress hopefully shippo will connect with you guys and do some of what was envisioned which is you know making sure that we can preserve and promote the richness of this virgin island and thank you for that and on the just to break down an acronym that's the historic preservation office that mrs hinds is referencing and i'm sorry and i definitely i um particularly the

1:45:33 component of culture, I do intend on really engaging that division within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources so we can be sure that in fact once the federal legislation goes through and the identified entity in the federal law originally just to put out it was in In fact, Succeed was the original organization named in the original bill back when first former Congresswoman Donna Christensen pushed the legislation for a number of years in support of her efforts and connection with Succeed. And it's important that we don't just, it's not just another piece of legislation where we, because just by way of background, we have long established that St. Croix is a national heritage area. The entire Virgin Islands, every single island, has a part in history.

1:46:30 The nature of St. Croix is a compilation and the extensive nature of what took place a lot on St. Croix. So with that is ensuring that the Historic Preservation Office, through a commissioner, that we don't end up where it's just lodged into an office. It just sits there. It's more than that. that there's going to be a lot of robust efforts to make sure that finally the St. Croix heritage area designation is not just that on paper, that it's going to be a livable, working document. And it's from the legislation to actually, you know, if we think many of us who have visited and traveled throughout the world, and we went to certain countries where you see history preserved. And, and that's what we were working now on restoring our history. So some of those same individuals and others can come and visit us and look at our history and, and, and us to use that towards historic tourism and inviting individuals to come and to be part of the history.

1:47:37 And if I may add quickly, just to clarify, a national heritage area is not a park. There is no change of ownership. national heritage areas were started by ronald reagan to to promote small business development because the republicans always said small business is the backbone of the american economy so what drives a national heritage area is business development there is no authority by the federal government the whole point is to put money in the hands of of small businesses and organizations that want to tell the story of the history and culture, like the Gullah Geechee region, like New Orleans, like the Black River area, like St. Augustine, places that you've heard about that are national heritage areas and where the businesses were created to tell the story. And just as an aside, in 2016, the National Heritage Area has put \$14 billion into the U.S. economy.

1:48:46 So we're not talking about charity here. We're talking about small business development, making sure they have the business plans, the insurance, and then they're marketed worldwide by the National Park Service. It doesn't get much better than that. And that is really important to note because I think when we think about history and culture, we think about it from the expenses, okay, what do we have to put out, what do we have to build as we build, but as we look at what are the benefits, what are the huge, huge benefits that will come by way of historic restoration and the, not just the designation, but the evolution and the implementation of a heritage area.

- 1:49:27 we have more comments okay we have a comment by Diana P Osborne she said having teachers take one required semester of US Virgin Islands history at the University is simply not sufficient as part of the certification process much less to expect them to teach it to the students thank you thank Thank you very much, and also we know her as Ms. Mary Mack, yes. Thank you, Ms. Osborne, thank you for your participation, and thank everyone for the participation. Thank you also to the media who's here with us this evening in support of this town hall, and my staff, we're here tonight, I really appreciate everybody. I think that the comment just made is really important, because right now, in order for us to, the teachers all have to execute this, right? the participation of teachers, and the, Ms. Osborne is correct, one semester, not even a year, remember, we're not requiring that all of our teachers become historians, but we know for a fact, as we roll out this effort, our teachers are gonna have to, it's gonna be more than just one semester, but it's gonna be a way for us to, and we add to that, the support for the teachers, because there's a cost to even taking that course, so we, through professional development, really have to put our dollars, you know, and reallocate our funds. Funds are spent in different areas, one of the areas that, and I'm looking actually to, listening this evening, and to engage the Commissioner of Tourism, Commissioner Bosholta, as the Department of Tourism puts out efforts and has certain funds for certain efforts, marketing efforts, so we look to redistribute those funds and look to support educational efforts. The Department of Education itself, looking at analyzing its own, their budget, be sure that we can help provide support for our teachers. Is that another comment or? Oh, Senator Malone, thank you, yes.
- 1:51:37 Go ahead. Go ahead, if you want to, if you have some bandwidth issues, If you just want to turn off your video, that might help, too. Yes. Okay, we have one comment from Kima Loving. She's asking, are we going to include the history of all seven flags, Dutch, Spanish, French, Knights of Malta, Danish, British, and U.S.? Yes, definitely. and a lot of that has been put together already however it's it's really how we're we're relaying that information definitely teaching I mean all now actually our children actually learn about even that you know know aware of teachings around Dutch claims and French claims and all that like so and to a level our students are in fact learning you know learning about history and so um really about that history but correct um when we when we teach the history it's going to be really important that it incorporates um all of the colonizers um definitely so i'm gonna you know senator willaker yes sean malone here yes let's ask something first i'd like to um commend the speaker who spoke about the national heritage area what it really meant that's very valuable information and i think it's uh it'll be very helpful for us to have that focus and you know leverage that to as a big incentive and that's why i said you know especially important that the history is taught because one of those things that leads to better social economic and political development around we're going to have the sense to understand that so we should definitely take a picture in the book and really leverage that opportunity which i think
- 1:53:37 is there a sitting former delegate donna christensen had gotten st core designated as such a heritage area but in terms of the the curriculum i really agree with the speak the the comment made that one of the um the persons who who offered a comment about the one semester of uh preparation for teachers teach via history was insufficient i just want to point out that maybe a good approach is i think we all can i think i think that the board of it the board of trustees of the university of the virgin islands two of its members are the commissioner of education and the the chair of the board of education more joint boards of education and definitely those two players have to be at the table to help us understand what the cost would be to the university to understand how we can you know enhance this part of the preparation of our teachers to impart this knowledge to our students as part of the action plan going forward just wanted to add that thank you and that's correct uh because the statute does provide as of course i'm alone is well aware um the statute that i brought up earlier title 17 section 41 the courses of study, section C2, I have to go through the, it's required that the Department of Education and the Board of Education work together to, because the Board of Education is responsible for the approval of curriculum. And the other flip side to that too, when we speak about, and I also want to indicate also the Career and Technical Education Board, because especially as we look at, there's so much history within what we know as vocational education, which is now, you know, called career education, that there is actually a lot of historical. Imagine our students actually
- 1:55:32 learning about masonry from the perspective of their own history and culture of, you know, from an African or indigenous perspective of how to build. And that's where we become more, it becomes more exciting because let's really all reflect on the fact that a number of our students um they're they're i mean let's let's put it out there i mean right now um we have to lift them up because they're going through so much parents teachers everyone you know overwhelmed with the whole distance learning and that effort but we want to make education fun and exciting um i think back to my own education and history and how i learned about virgin Islands of Caribbean history, it was quite fun and quite exciting, at least the way it was presented to me and teachers I had. But not everyone, because it has not been robust, not everyone had that fortune of going hiking and hiking east to west, I've hiked all over the island, but I say all that to say that's something that should just be commonplace, not a special experience because of the school you go to or because of the resources your parents have or what have you, the cases. Let's make it so that everyone is able to take part. So thank

you.

- 1:56:42 All right, we have a comment from Emanuela Perez-Cacias. She said, my concern is a limited history Virgin Islanders want to recognize. We must open the dialogue to all angles and perspective. I believe VI history should be taught in context of the world. Well, excellent comment. And Emanuela is a member of the Board of Education, so I really appreciate that. You know, she's in her individual capacity in the comment. Thank you so much, Mrs. Perez-Cacias, for your statement. Thank you for your participation. And that's correct. We cannot limit it. We don't want it to be limiting. It is quite robust, as we have our presenters tonight and others not present, but all those who have also put on the record. We do, in fact, you know, when we talk about, yes, and even, you know, going back, we learned about the saladoids. I mean, how many people know about the saladoids? I learned that in ninth grade, the Salado Indians that predated the Caribs and the Tainos, we have the Sibonets and others. So when we teach history from even an indigenous perspective, we go way back, we're going to go far back. And so, yes, we have to teach beyond. It's very limited this time, that's correct. It's limited because, again, much of the works are not getting into the schools. the works that need to be turned into workbooks and textbooks. That's the work that needs to be done. In the 80s, a lot of work was done.
- 1:58:20 And I keep on emphasizing, if in 1986, as I give a comparative, in 1986, they worked with typewriters to type up over 300-page compilation. Did it have issues? Yes. Did I read the compilation? I sure did. And it has some issues I do lift up for my Governor Turnbull. He was a commissioner of education then, and he worked, and he got it done. There were edits, some serious edits that need to be made, because one of the things that have not been put into the curriculum is the teaching of colonialism and decolonization, rather. And that's not really well embedded into the text. You're not teaching about to promote colonialism. You're teaching to decolonize, to move and transition your government and your people from colonial status. Oh, yes, yes, Mr. Carnero. Yes. Oh, Mr. Richards first, and then you, Mr. Carnero. My apologies.
- 1:59:15 Geron, go ahead. Mr. Richards? Well, I actually didn't really have a comment to make, but I can say that in connection to some of the topics you guys were speaking about, especially in reference to active engagement such as taking students on field trips i can say that um personally i can testify that students really learn a lot more when you take them out to these different cultural areas and sites and have them actively learn about these different places and you mentioned a very good person who really and truly does a lot of historical hikes olasi davis i think that he should really and truly be considered as we proceed along this process and finally you mentioned about um well different presenters mention about historical games and stuff i also um personally introduced to my students a west african game called wari and that game has a lot of mathematical concepts in it and students really and truly gravitate to it for some reason i'm not sure. Most likely the reason is because it's culturally relevant to them, but I can agree with the active engagement that you guys have been speaking about so far. Thank you.
- 2:00:48 Thank you. And thank you very much, Mr. Richards, for those comments. Okay. I wanted to touch on a couple of things. Senator Whitaker, you mentioned about students building and doing different things. I think if Virgin Islands children realize that every building, every structure that you see of significance in the Virgin Islands were built by the hands of Virgin Islanders. Although those forts and the big churches and everything may have been funded with dollars from Denmark, it was blacks and the slaves that actually constructed every stone that went into fort christian for christopher and fort frederick as well as all of the sugarcane mills throughout the uh the islands and all of the uh the the different great houses uh everything you see was constructed by us we were the architects that built all of those things with very little education but a lot of talent the other thing is, from a global perspective, there was a caller that had a question about selling Virgin Island's history from a standpoint of, well, how does it impact the world, or how does the world impact us? Virgin Islanders, like William Leedsorf, he helped found the city of San Francisco. Abraham Marco, he was one of the designers of the original American flag you have levi uh uh lewis levy who the the the town of levy florida is named after even judah benjamin uh virgin islander with his picture on a two dollar u.s bill you know and then if you look at from the uh spectrum of sports you had peter uh jackson who was the heavyweight champion in Australia. You have people like Levi Bau, who's an 18-time basketball champion in Switzerland. You have people, just so many Virgin Islands impacting so many different things all over the world. Even in St. John, there was a study that was done in 1969 with the Tektite program under the ocean to study weightlessness and to study isolation. And a lot of the things that they learned there, they used to put a man on the moon. Now, how many people in the Virgin Islands
- 2:03:13 know that story, that we were instrumental in helping to put a man on the moon? Okay. This is all a huge part of Virgin Islands history that we don't talk about. And it's a travesty that these things are not in our textbooks because we need to feed these to our children so that they can learn their history and their culture. And yes, it is important to know certain dates like 1733, 1848, 1878, and 1917. We all know those dates. However, it's also important to know how to make a Johnny cake. You know, it's important. Saltfish is an important part of our history and our culture. You know, the importance of Quelle Bay, the importance of Quadril, the importance of music, not just Soca and Calypso and stuff like

that, but all of the music that we've been a part of. All of these things are part of who our history is and who our culture is. And I really do look forward to us putting that criteria out there for what all we look forward to having in that textbook, whether it's 20 different categories or chapters or whatever, and then taking bids and having people submit their samples of what they think, you know, would be a good representation of the Virgin Islands. One of the best books that I've seen, and like I said, I have over 500 books in my collection. One of the best books that I've ever seen was something that was written on the 50th anniversary of transfer date. And what they did is they got experts in the different fields, one in architecture, one in cuisine, one in carnival, one about history, one about, you know, the people in the legislature, the laws, and everybody for the expert of their field, they contributed their piece to put together and make one book. So it wasn't one person trying to be an expert in all fields. We took the existing experts that we had and let them give their feedback and through that created one book that was our story 50 years into the the american experience thank you for thank you very much for that mr canario and that's um correct

2:05:26 we i mean there's so much history so much um unknown and when we lift up those individuals who have gone who have passed and bring them to the present it's going to be really powerful um to know of those works um so i thank you thank you both um the a lot of what's been shared tonight is really a pathway forward it's really um not just statements iterations but how together we're going to work with the stakeholders if you are a stakeholder i also want to put out most importantly our phone number from my office so it's 712-2379 that's 712-2379 my email address is senator Whitaker at legvi.org. If you've joined us on Facebook, I can make it very easy for you. You can go to Senator Whitaker and I encourage you to like my page. Also, please also like the legislature's page as they've put out this information on their committee hearings. It's really important that you also take part. What are the next steps? And before I move on to the next steps, do you have any more comments as we work on closing out on tonight's town hall? No more comments? Okay.

2:06:30 well i want to um at this time um and just um have the presenters provide just some last words as we close out so start off with you um mrs hines some of the your last closing closing remarks thank you uh first and foremost thank you so very much i'm so appreciative of the stance you have taken even before you got in the legislature and the way you prepared yourself to do this work that you're doing so very well um i want to thank the other panelists i am so excited i have like pages of notes that i've been taking um mr richards saying you know cultural education liberates the soul hello um you know just it's so much to hear about Mr. Cornero's long book list that's just like i'm so i'm really pumped and energized by this um and i thank Ms. Romero for all of her work in supporting this to happen as as it has happened um and you know i just i hope that well not i hope i know that with Senator Whitaker this is not talking the talk this is about walking the talk so i thank you all very very much and i look forward to more exchanges like this i've learned a lot tonight thank you thank you so much thank you thank you so much next presenter who was in right after that was i would like to echo some of the same sentiments, Senator Whitaker. Thank you so very much for

2:08:30 taking on this challenge. I'd like to thank the fellow panel members, thank the different callers for calling in with some great questions and great feedback. Again, you have myself as a servant in any capacity that I can function at to, you know, bring out the very best in who we are as a people and to help us shine that much more, not just today, but for many years going forward. Thank you. Mr. Richards? Yeah, I just wanted to piggyback on what has been already said. Thank you so much for organizing this meeting, which is very crucial, especially to our youth here in the virgin islands i am a firm believer that education is a foundation of any society and if we educate our youth we're really and truly educating our future so there was this famous emperor from ethiopia by the name of haile selassie who once said education of the youth is a surest guarantee for a better life here on earth so i'm hoping that with all the comments that were mentioned amongst the different presenters and and also the comments from various people on social media that this can be taken further in order to actualize the different concepts that were spoken about thanks again for inviting me thank you thank you so much thank you so much for the the honor of being able to sit listen get ready to action with you and i know that that this has been on your heart for many many years and as you mentioned you know uh senator malone as a mentor and his keywords were action plan what is the action plan so as i've heard here there's a lot of ideas there's a lot of knowledge there's a lot of wisdom. There's so much. And with the passion, the wisdom, the action plan, I have no doubt

2:10:34 that it will be done. This is it's going to be done. So I thank you for the opportunity to be of service in whatever capacity that I can be. And I have learned so much this evening. And I thank you so much for that opportunity. Thank you. Thank you so much. And last but not least, senator malone your closing remarks yes thank you yes thank you so much again senator whitaker i can't thank you enough and i echo all of the comments made by the other presenters um regarding your leadership on this issue and i'm very excited like they thought of young hanks right i think who was that speaking about um national heritage and other speakers about the things that i've learned also from the presenters and the wonderful questions that were posed by those persons participating in social media in this town hall this is a great opportunity for us to um to refocus so we have this pandemic that we're trying to you know bring to some kind of closure i have to

commend the territories government and how they handled it handling it and of course with the hurricane recovery that's taking place it's a great time for us to see this issue as as important as those other matters that we're dealing with our infrastructure and other things because without it as others have commented we are not going to maximize the fullest potential for virgin islanders for the future it's a great time to really get people excited about this i think uh might be and i'm here to to support you in any way you know that's senator whitaker and the panelists to figure out a way strategically one of my i like to uh i'm kind of very focused on getting the stuff done is to figure out how we can get this moving what the legislation that you're working on advocacy constant you know hate to say the word by lack of a better term harassing the powers that be the other powers that be to get them to see this as something and they have to see it it is critical as you can see what has happened when we

2:12:49 didn't do it well we have all this crime and these questions about our youth understanding who they are and crime is a as a as a symptom of this is my opinion i'm thinking probably right of a lack of strong cultural identity you know people take the time to harm somebody else that means you don't love yourself and we don't teach self-love because we don't really understand completely who we are some of us of course everyone in this panel does but we talk about our young people right to have some kind of hope and uh aspirations for the future in the virgin and just in diaspora and i really am hopeful that we have time to refocus and get this family done i really learned a lot from conero everybody you guys give me things i know i learned today the two dollar bill i didn't know this so look how much information is out there that you know we don't know and if we had known that when we were younger imagine how much greater we could have been as a society to know that we have we are standing on the shoulders of very very very influential talented intelligent remarkable people so it's a win-win all over when we really uh get behind this issue so senator whitaker kudos to you once again and we're here to support you in any way you can thanks for having me and and what a way to end i mean thank you so much senator malone because that's what this step is what are the next steps And tonight, I want to also, again, thank my staff, my dynamic staff, who worked diligently to the media team. You certainly rocked. You know, last week, we appreciate you immensely, because they did pull this off. It was an effort. I really appreciate each of you and to everyone. And even to my colleagues who may not be with me tonight, I also want to express that I've engaged with them, and we are going to look forward to working with all my fellow colleagues. I want to close out with a senator who inspired me as well, another senator.

2:15:00 And she said once, we live in a world where kisses go by favor and the challenge of politics is to help those people, the poor, the downtrodden, and unlettered, who need someone to pry open a door for them. This is where I find the great satisfaction, Senator Ruby M. Rouse. So to that end, I want to thank everyone. Thank everyone who participated on the Facebook Live. We are moving forward steadily, more stakeholders, more engagement, and more execution. And every time we can think about it, we should move in such a way that we know that we're saving lives. And I believe we're going to be saving lives through this effort. So I want to say goodnight to everyone. Please stay safe.

2:15:46 God bless, love, and healing. Goodnight. Thank you. Thank you.

People named in this transcript

SUSPECTED, and a finding aid only. Names were matched by machine against the spellings used across all 426 of our transcripts, and the title is the one used in the room. Being named here is NOT evidence that a person attended or spoke · only that the name was said. Speech recognition mishears names, so a spelling may be wrong even where no alternative is offered.

12x **Senator Shawn Michael Malone**

heard in this transcript as: Malone

10x **Senator Genevieve R. Whitaker**

heard in this transcript as: Genevieve Whitaker, Whitaker

Bills and acts referred to

Matched by number against our own acts corpus. The number is what the recognition heard, so it may be wrong; where it resolved, the title is the one the Legislature gave the act.

Referred to but not found in our acts corpus: Act 4844