



| African Liberation Day Celebration

Legislature USVI

May 25, 2023 · 2.6 hours · gov

Source recording	https://youtu.be/gbvzuSVK1zg
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. Thank you. [2 such phrases repeated 18 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:09:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll see you next time. [3 such phrases repeated 14 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:16:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll see you next time. Transcribed by ESO, translated by · Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll see you next time.
- 0:21:00 Thank you. We'll be right back. Hello, lady. [3 such phrases repeated 9 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:25:30 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back.
- 0:27:00 Thank you. We'll be right back.
- 0:28:00 We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. Thank you. It's red.
- 0:31:00 Thank you. Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back. Thank you. please be seated good morning and welcome to the 35th legislature's
- 0:34:29 2023 African Liberation Day Ceremony. African Liberation Day, as enacted by Act No. 5473, calls for a time every year on May 25th to be set aside to remember our proud African heritage and commemorate the evolution of the Virgin Islands through that heritage. On a global level, African Liberation Day, or ALD, is celebrated each year around the world also on May 25th, often featuring a symposium of international speakers, a march and rally, culturally relevant vendors, and edutainment. This local ceremony is a shining example of edutainment, which is education through cultural entertainment. Before we begin our program, we recognize the presence of Senate President, Novell E. Francis, Jr.

- 0:35:32 Senate Vice President, Marvin Blyden. Secretary, Carla Joseph. And Senators Ray Fonseca, Dwayne M. DeGraff, and Milton Potter. Our program was called to order this morning by the tradition of a conch shell blow. The symbolism of this act is universally known, and that symbolism is freedom. The call of the conch shell has signified freedom to our ancestors from enslavement. Thank you, Ms. Amin, cultural traditional artists, for providing our call this morning.
- 0:36:34 I am Karel Sheridan, Executive Director of the 35th Legislature, and I will serve as your guide during this ceremony. To honor our African roots this morning, we will hear a rendition of the South African National Anthem provided by the Ulla F. Muller Bambula Dancers and Drummers Group, directed by Leneith Mercer, immediately followed by the Virgin Islands March. Thank you. Oh Asher!
- 0:38:32 Asher! I hear the Virgin Islands, carols of the sea, where beaches bright will fall south, and Oh, there's a virgin islands And beautiful and tall Beneath the sunny skies Hilltops are over the work For one another The Virgin Islands, humbly now we pray, where my kind can join today, unfriendly was our God bless the Virgin Islands, beautiful at all.
- 0:39:55 We gave us our knees, God, healed our side, oh, what a welcome for one and all. We especially want to thank these young people as school is over. And I know this was a day when they could have definitely slept in.
- 0:40:33 Please be seated. The act of a libation is the act of pouring a liquid as a sacrifice. And we now call on the Honorable Myron D. Jackson and Malachi Thomas to provide libation. Thank you. Good morning. Good morning.
- 0:41:11 It's a pleasure to be here this morning to do the libation. There are traditions and it varies from country to country. However, what is consistent is that we pour libation for our ancestors. And of course, it is an African tradition going back thousands of years. You may use water or you may use spirits, rum. Gin, wine, a beer, mobby. And this morning, in keeping with that tradition, we're pouring libation for our ancestors who came before us.
- 0:41:56 If it was not for them, we would not be here. So good morning, Senate President, the Vice President, Madam Secretary, members of the 35th Legislature, our master drummers, our pastor, reverend, members of the delegation, here with us today, the elders from the Pan-African Support Group, and other members from the community, and you, the Virgin Islands community. Good morning. No, no, no, no. Good morning. Okay, good. But so in that regards, I'm going to pour the libation, and I can't do both. So can you assist me, please, since you're the youngest in the room that I've identified, and can the eldest in the room identify themselves?
- 0:42:55 I might be, but I can't be the one. So who's the eldest in the room? Okay, very well. So in that regards, come on the side here for me, and you're going to hold the mic. Thank you. Come close. So one of the traditions we do is we just simple water. So we're going to have water, and I'm going to pour that water. I think this is the mic. I'm gonna pour that water into the vessel so we've gotten the permission of the eldest mr. Francis and the youngest penny feather very well okay thank you you could hold that for me okay so i'm going to do two things i'm going to pay tribute uh in our african tradition and joining me are Malachi Thomas and Gail Smith. And we'll, at the end of our libation, we will do a batter drumming in the Yoruba tradition
- 0:44:50 as part of this libation, which is appropriate for today. And it's always appropriate when we're acknowledging our African heritage and our African ancestors. so if you could hold that for me while I'm doing this libation there will be a time slot during my presentation that I am going to open the floor for you to call your ancestors and of course today we're celebrating African liberation day and of course the theme of that day is one of liberation of the continent of Africa and the African diaspora that we are here to honor those who came before our freedom fighters that have brought us to this day where we are free men and and women, and of course, there are parts of the world where that status is questionable as being free citizens to the land that they live or they dwell. So this history of us being here today is why we are pouring this, honoring those of the past. So when I open the floor, you may call freedom fighters, You may call a family member who has passed, and the response is ashay. Can I hear that?
- 0:46:29 Ashay. Wonderful. So be it. That's what it means. Okay. Come close. Could you hold that for me? Just come on this side. This side. Good. Very good. So. oh god the creator we come before you this morning uh to pay tribute to our ancestors we ask that you give us your blessings in recognizing this day of our fathers and mothers of our heroes and sheroes of our elders of our freedom fighters who paid the ultimate price for freedom for liberation for self-determination and then on the eve of our 175th emancipation from slavery in the former danish west indies today the united the virgin islands of the united States we ask for your blessings and we ask that as we pour this vibration in remembrance that you also bless us as a community and bless the children who are here and that dwell in the Virgin Islands and our children outside of this territory scattered around the world and that we remember the African diaspora those at home and those abroad, and that we also remember the words of our very own Edward Wilmot Blyden, who was born in 1832 here on St. Thomas in Longpath, left in 1850 to attend seminary school and subsequently denied and traveled and resettled in Liberia and Sierra Leone and became the father

- 0:48:22 of the Pan-African movement. And in that regards, we say, I say. We also remember our freedom fighters, Marcus Maguire Garvey. I say. We remember our freedom fighters of 1733 on the island of St. John, the Aquamuse. I say.
- 0:48:48 We remember our Freedom Fighters of 1750 and 1848. We remember our Queens, all of our Queens, the Queens of the Fireburn, and the men and women, the heroes and sheroes who participated in that heroic event of life. 1878. Of course, we remember 1848 and the eve of our emancipation, and we remember those freedom fighters as well, General Bodo, General King, and all the countless others, documented and undocumented who paid the ultimate price of their lives and personal sacrifices remember the ancestors of post-emancipation who paved the way for self-determination members of this body too too many to mention today, but we pay respect to the elected leaders going back from early times to present who have departed this life. We remember our governors who have passed are elected governors. And we ask in remembrance, Ashe. At this time, we open the floor.
- 0:50:38 Ashe. Asheh. Marianne Francis. [3 such phrases repeated 16 times · standby audio before the proceeding, transcribed by the recogniser as speech]
- 0:51:09 Asheh. Leonard Monsanto. Asheh. Slave of Legacy Jackson. Asheh. Dean Mary. Asheh. Hamilton Adam Senior. Asheh. David Hamilton Jackson. Asheh. Asheh. Malcolm X. Asheh. Toussaint Louverture. Asheh. Tina Turner. Asheh. Martin Luther King. Asheh. Asheh. And all those known and unknown, we pour this libation in their honor, and we remember them and we ask for blessings for our generations to come.
- 0:52:02 I say. Thank you. Hold it. Thank you. morning my name is Malachi Thomas but in this next part of this day I am Oshun Dayo which means Oshun brings joy and that is the name that was assigned and divine to me when I was initiated in the tradition in which we all practice.
- 0:53:03 In this next moment, this is Ifailu, Baba Giles Smith, a priest of Orumela and Shango. And this is Oshun Fora, Baba Senator Myron Jackson. We're getting ready to play a series of rhythms that's a part of the Oro Igbo Du, which is the order of the sacred rhythms in the sacred grove. When people get initiated, they have to get presented to the drums and their particular rhythms that's played to communicate to God and the spirits of the universe what the community achieved. The rhythms that we are going to play today are for the warriors. Orisha Eshuilegbara, Orisha Ogun, and Orisha Oshosi. At the end, because our fight for liberation and our fight for emancipation, because it should be filled with joy as well, we're going to end with a rhythm called Yesa, and we're going to sing for Orisha Oshun. okay these drums are called the bata this is called ia ilu which means mother drum this is the itotole which means the truth travels and this is okonkolo or omo which means child mother father child the child keeps the family together there's a lot of communication that happens between mom and dad and you know sometimes parents they get heated and start to butt heads the Okonkolo, when we start communicating so that we don't get lost or start arguing, the Okonkolo is the bell. It keeps us together. It reminds us where we are and where we're trying to go.
- 0:54:52 Okay? So that's what we're getting ready to do for you. Thank you. Let's go. Thank you. Let's go. We'll be right back. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Ashi! We'll be right back. Oh Oh I don't know, I don't know. Oh
- 1:02:10 Thank you. Thank you, the ancestors are certainly smiling as we keep traditions alive, I want to just remind everyone that we are reaching not only the persons in this room, but because of the internet and our broadcast, we will be reaching international audiences with our ceremony.
- 1:02:54 And I must say that we are one under the US flag that has legislation for African Liberation Day. So as Virgin Islanders, we should certainly be proud. I invite now, we're gonna have a slight change to the program, I invite now Queens, Sorry. We will not have a slight change to the program. I apologize for that. We will be led in prayer this morning with an invocation from Reverend Sandy A. Wilson, Dean of Cathedral Church of the All Saints. Sawabona. We see you.
- 1:03:37 we honor you we are glad that you are here on this day in our 175th year of life here we are also celebrating the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the organization of African unity it was founded on this day in 1963 and so we recognize that our history is our strength. When we discover our history, then we can be free. And so we mark this day at a time when cooperation and solidarity to advance the continent's future is more needed than ever. No matter what people say, Africa's dynamism is unstoppable, its potential is breathtaking, from the vibrancy of its huge number of young people to the possibilities of free trade. And so as we pray this morning I want to share words that have come from a time and a place in South Africa when people were reflective of who we are and where we've been and where we are now. So let us pray. We struggled against one another but now we are reconciled to struggle for one another. We believed it was right to withstand one another. Now we are reconciled to struggle for one another. We endured the power of violence.
- 1:05:15 Now we are reconciled to the power of tolerance. We built irreconcilable barriers between us. Now we seek to build a society of reconciliation. We suffered separateness that did not work. Now we are reconciled to make togetherness work. We believed that we alone held the truth. Now we are reconciled in the knowledge that the truth holds us. We tried to

frighten one another into submission. Now we are reconciled to lift one another into fulfillment. We revered or rejected the apartheid system. Now we are reconciled to pray for those who are part of that. We fought our call, we fought to call the land our own, and now we know reconciliation is in knowing that the earth belongs to God and that we are simply stewards of it.

1:06:15 We let greed control us. Now we know that reconciliation is measured by the development of the poor. We Christians rejected other peoples of faith as godless, and now we are reconciled to see God's way for all of us in the many ways that we share that love. We do not pretend that we've already won or that we're already perfect. Now we are reconciled to press on together to the fullness which lies ahead. And so we bring together our races, our languages, our traditions, our politics, our cultures. We are all Africans. We commit ourselves to discover an African solution under God. Thanks be to God for the gift of reconciliation, and thanks for this united Africa that we celebrate this day, and thank you for the 175 years of life in this diaspora. Amen.

1:07:14 Thank you so much, Reverend Williams. We've learned so many things today. We've learned to pay homage to our ancestors, that the truth holds us, that the earth belongs to God, and that reconciliation is a gift. So that we impart specific knowledge as to Act 54-73, to recite the Virgin Islands Code Chapter 1, Title 1, I'm sorry, Chapter 11, Section 192, we call on Kaumba Olani of the Pan-African Support Group.

1:08:07 And before I do so, I just quickly want to recognize the presence of Senator Kenneth L. Gittins and Senator Alma Francis Heiliger. Thank you for joining us this morning, Senator. African Liberation Day. What's happening? African Liberation Day. Abaragani, Abaragani, Abaragani, Abaragani, Act No. 5473, approved November 3, 1989, to proclaim the third week in May at Vorge Island African Heritage Week, Where as the ancestors of a major portion of the population of the Virgin Islands are African.

1:09:01 And where as these Africans were brought to the Virgin Islands by force taken away from their homeland, family and culture. and whereas time should be set aside to remember our proud African heritage and whereas the legislature of the Virgin Islands urge all residents to join in the observance of the Virgin Islands African Heritage Week which will serve to commemorate the evolution of the Virgin Islands through our African heritage.

1:09:50 Now, therefore, be it enacted by the legislature of the Virgin Islands, Section 1, Title 1, Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a new Section 1901 to read as follow. Section 1901, Rhode Island African Heritage Week and African Liberation Day. Section 8, the third week in May shall be observed as quote Rhode Island African Heritage Week unquote and the 25th day of May shall be observed as quote African Liberation Day unquote. Section B at least 15 days prior to Virginia African Heritage Week the governor shall issue proclamation calling on all resident to join together in appropriate ceremony to reflect upon our African heritage. Section c the governor shall appoint a committee no so appoint a commitment each year to coordinate with the african appraisal workshop and other interesting community groups and develop appropriate plans programs and ceremony for the celebration of african heritage week in the village island section d the legislature on african liberation day shall hold appropriate ceremony on the ground of the capitol building

1:11:42 charlotte amali st thomas such ceremony shall include the rising of the african Liberation. Flag. Ashi. Thank you very much. It's so very important for us to know what the requirements are and certainly the legislature always ensures that we have a ceremony on African Liberation Day. Now we're going to continue the heritage tributes and we're going to hear from the drums of the Echo people. We unfortunately will not have them accompanied by the movements of the sister duo, Queens of the Earth, but we invite you to view their performances online as they represent so well young members of the movement and their interpretation of where the movement is going through dance.

1:12:39 Without further ado, echo people. Okay, I apologize. I also would like to recognize the presence of Senator Maurice James who has also joined us this morning. This first psalm is a welcome psalm. Over the years and the centuries, we have done this psalm here. We'll keep living in Africa, come right down to the Caribbean and elsewhere. And personally, it's very uncomfortable with what's going on in the Virgin Islands. We need to come more together.

1:13:13 We're saying a lot, but we're doing a lot for the benefit of black people, African people. we're saying african liberation then what does that mean we need to see it in reality we're tired of talking we're tired okay anyway we're going to do this one and then we're going to do queen there okay Let's go. Thank you. Asher Asher Asher Asher Asher Yes Oh Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Thank you. Let's go. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Thank you. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah Thank you. Thank you. A head is better than fuck, the wires feel as spark He's wearing, wear your boy, you do what you say Break the flambeau, bring your match, bring your cutlass, be down He's wearing, wear your boy, you do what you say He's wearing, wear your boy, you do what you say I'll see you next time. We'll be right back. Thank you. We'll be right back. For more information, visit www.fema.gov Great job, great job. Great job. Great job. Great job. Thank you.

Novelli Francis Jr.

- 1:33:58 Thank you very much, Empress of Ceremony. Queen Mary, where you going to burn? Wow, every time I hear that, I get goose pimples, and today was no different. Let me say a pleasant good morning, a blessed good morning to everyone. Senate Vice President Blyton, Senate Secretary Carla Joseph, Senate Majority Leader Senate Kenneth Gittins, Senator Minority Leader, Senator Dwayne DeGraff, Senator Ray Fonseca, Senator Potter, Senator James, Senator Francis Heiliger, former Senate President Jackson, all that have gathered here this morning, certainly want to welcome our Dean, Reverend Wilson, as well as all of the other distinguished members that's here before us this morning.
- 1:34:57 Good morning, once again, and welcome to the, good morning, and welcome to the Legislative Hall. I want to really recognize the work that has been done by the Executive Director and her team, because I think it's critical that we, again, commend her for putting forth this celebration. The honest truth, as Senate President, all I do is walk in. All of the work is being done behind the scenes by these fine individuals and I want to publicly say thank you. A round of applause for them of course. Today I'm honored to welcome our culture bearers and members of the community to the 35th legislature's commemoration of Virgin Islands African Heritage Week and African Liberation Day.
- 1:35:52 And by the way, the governor has signed the proclamation as required by law, hence we do have official proclamation for today. Today is more than drumming and wearing of African clothing. It's a celebration of our history, both good and bad, as people of African descendants. Our story and how we came to be in the Caribbean is one that deserves to be in all of our history book and taught to our children. Our history makes us who we are. Our roots are deep and through these roots we are bound with all Africans and the people of the African descent across the Caribbean and across the diaspora. We stand together in struggle, in solidarity, and of course, in celebration. Don't ever forget that. For over 30 years, the Territory have commemorated African Liberation Day. There are so many familiar faces here with us today, and also new faces. I'm encouraged that our culture bearers are passing through, passing the torch on of our history and heritage and cultural celebration to a new generation who will carry us forward and at this time again I want to recognize the youth group that actually our students that gave our opening thank you it's important that we're able to pass that on I want to thank you for your participation today and for joining the legislature's commemoration of African Heritage Week and African Liberation Day we have a lot more to do and I want to take this opportunity as well to thank Senator Angel Bocas for his presentation I think it was well done and certainly
- 1:37:46 commemorate of what we do here at the 35th legislature of the Virgin Islands I want to thank him for his production there this morning we have some more in store for today so you'll stay tuned we'll be going out onto the grounds and And again, we have an opportunity to make sure that we're raising the flag and recognizing the African Liberation Day today. Thank you all for being here this morning. Ashe.
- 1:38:20 Thank you so much, President Francis, for those words. Now, we will be hearing from our keynote speaker. Our keynote speaker today is Anna Wallace Francis. Ms. Francis is a member of the Pan-African Support Group and is an avid supporter of the movement. The annual African Liberation Day ceremony is something that she is happy to attend each year and participate in annually. Each year she remains excited to see more and more youth participate in African liberation. On a personal note, Ms. Francis is a generational Virgin Islander and has roots in teaching having taught at the Adelita Cancrine, BCB, Bertha Ciber Shelter, and Ivana Eudora Ken High School.
- 1:39:06 Additionally, she is an environmentalist and an activist. Mrs. Francis is passionate about having a spiritual base to ground us and to ensure that we continue to build upon our legacies. Therefore, to provide our keynote on the history of African liberation, Miss Anna Wallace Francis. protocol they haven't been established and the drums haven't invoked and brought forth that energy that we all need, starting with the conch shell, the awesome voices of our youth. It is such a pleasure to look around and see our legislative body here. To you I say hotep, assalamu alaikum, jambo, bonjour, buenos dias, good morning. Let us give thanks to our creator for this day and the opportunity for all of us to work together for the benefit of humanity. Let us wisely use and give respect for the handiworks of God, which allow us to sustain ourselves. Let us practice harambe, which is to pull together and use our collective faith,
- 1:41:16 knowledge and learned experiences from past failures and successes to solve the problems which befall our community I am Anna Wallace Francis and I thank you so very much for this opportunity to share some thoughts with you today as we pass this torch of knowledge, tradition, and education on to the next generation. To our honorable elected officials, I beseech you to let your light shine brightly that others can see their way out of the darkness. May your your time serving in this body be one of enlightenment and of creating a path where our people can achieve education, economic, physical, cultural, and mental liberation. Thus I ask Abarigani, What's happening, Abarigani?
- 1:42:38 Yes, today I am pleased to be a part of honoring our history for struggle for African liberation. Too often, due to miseducation, we get sidetracked by the word African and don't see it as it relates to us here in the Virgin Islands. Thus

my emphasis today is to present African liberation as an ongoing struggle throughout history in all geographical regions where the descendants of Africans reside, especially in the Virgin Islands. Please note we are one of the few places that a law was made, enacted, embodied. One of the few places where we are to acknowledge and celebrate African Liberation Day. The drums showed us that African unity. Two drumming groups I dare take the liberty to say I don't think they practice together but did you see that harmony did you feel the speaking did you see the drums talking to one another that is the energy and the tradition that we must embrace the need for African liberation and unification green gates significant or attention in 1958 when Kwame Nkrumah the first president of the

1:44:31 independent Republic of Ghana led the first conference of independent states held in Accra which was attended by eight independent states the 15th of April was declared African Freedom Day and was to be marked each year highlighting the onward progress of the liberation movement. It symbolized the determination of the African people to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation. Between 1958 and 1963, the struggle for liberation in testified, leading to 17 more countries be gaining their independence. Thus on May 25th, 1963, African leaders convened a summit meeting to found the Organization of African Unity. Now much like the growth of Negro History Week to African History Month, the name and date change of African Freedom Day on April 15th to African Liberation Day on May 25th, this action developed from growth in political education, organization, and a greater number of African countries which had attained their independence.

1:46:04 To the youth I say, we have a way of repeating things in different forms through the music, through words, through dance. So as I repeat much of what was being said, it should soak in to your soul. So just know African Liberation Day is also known as African Unity Day and Africa Day by the African Union. It simultaneously commemorates the founding of the Organization of African Unity in May of 1963 when 30 of 32 independent African states signed the founding charter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, committing to help bring about change, freedom, and independence to African countries. Later in 1991, the OAU established the African economic community and in 2002 the OAU established its own successor, the African Union. So you see working together between May 25th 1963 and 2011, 22 more African countries gained their independence. Thus annually May 25th is the time set aside to celebrate our struggles and achievement of African liberation which did not take one day or one person. Now I would be remiss if I ended letting the public think that the fight for African liberation started in 1958 and was just about the continent of Africa. The African liberation movement

1:48:14 has been around for donkey years. From the first time Africans were enslaved throughout history there has always been the innate struggle by subjugate peoples to attain their freedom. Since the time of Islamic or Muslim enslavement, Africans have been fighting for their liberation. Now as I chronically or we chronically look back in history, we see in the Caribbean the same struggle for liberation which started after 1492 when Columbus introduces the New World as a method for enriching the Europeans by enslaving the indigenous people and the Africans. You know the Kalinago, the Inka, the Taino, the Caribs, the Arawaks, all struggled for their liberation, although in a different way. Some chose death rather than enslavement. That was 531 years ago. In 1503, Spain brought the first enslaved Africans into the Caribbean. That was 520 years ago. You know from the time we got here this shore we had the Maroons. There are countless records of them fighting for their freedom. Highlight we're gonna move fast forward to 1673 when the slave ships from Africa brought 103 enslaved Africans to St. Thomas. That's 350 years ago. How many generations? Then 18 years later, in 1691, the first reported, reported slave conspiracy on St. Thomas. But we know from time they were in the ships, we

1:50:44 know there was movement we know that okay give thanks for 1733 the St. John African Revolution, Amina, Claude, our sister, working for our freedom, working together, coming from different groups, working together and holding St. John for almost eight months and flying their African flag.

1:51:31 We thank them for that. That shows our move towards independence. That was even before the Haitian independence movement. Yet still, in 1734, Denmark establishes a new colony on St. Croix and brings more enslaved Africans introduced from St. Thomas, the Leeward Islands, and Africa. In 1746 we had a lot of maroon disturbances on St. Croix imagine crushed by to mingle tamarind free colored corpse that's 277 277 years ago. Little known is that in 1759, Sam Hector and William Davis planned to liberate St. Croix and establish a black republic. However, their efforts were found out and they were unable to complete their mission. That's 264 years ago. At the same time while we were here in the Caribbean throughout the Caribbean Islands, in Africa the European states were now having a scramble for Africa. So between the 1880s and 1900s Britain managed to colonize 22 countries. France colonized 20 countries, Spain five countries, Portugal five countries, Belgium colonized three, but their treatment was like a hundred. Italy tried to colonize

1:53:31 one which was Ethiopia. Back in the Caribbean, while we're scrambling for Africa, in 1838, full emancipation in the British West Indies was given to the then enslaved Africans. Therefore, our Saintonian brothers and sisters began escaping to Tortola and other British islands. That was a hundred and eighty-five years ago. So we see we've gone from

531 down to 185 with this continuous struggle for liberation and independence. We remember and we celebrate this year most importantly 1848 July at 2 a.m. in the morning Frederick von Schulten awakened by militia reporting disturbances on East End plantations. By 3 to 4 o'clock in that afternoon the governor declares the people free and asked them to return home. Ironically for me, he then goes into Fort Frederick and sits down to eat. By 7 a.m., 7 p.m., Von Schulten arrives in Christiansted, orders an emancipation decree printed. Most importantly, I want to highlight that at 9 p.m., troops at Western entrance to Christiansted fire on a group of approaching newly emancipated persons, killing and wounding several and forcing the remainder to withdraw. We celebrate this year that that was 175

- 1:55:31 years ago and this example of what happened at nine o'clock that even shows us when that when we fight for liberation there are casualties but we must fight back in Africa between 1900s and 1945 various political leaders and intellectuals from Europe North America and Africa met six times in a pan African conference to discuss colonial control of Africa and develop strategies for eventual African political liberation I want to highlight that in In 1897, Henry Sylvester Williams, a West Indian barrister, formed the African Association in London, England, to encourage Pan-African unity, especially throughout the British colonies.
- 1:56:29 He said that Africans and those of the African descent living in the diaspora needed a forum to address the common problems in the diaspora and on the continent. We had six conferences. In 1945 the movement was reorganized after the war and what we want to highlight here was that for the first time representatives of political parties from Africa and the West Indies attended the meetings, moreover the conservative credo of a form gave way to radical social political and economic demands. Congress participants unequivocally demanded an end to colonialization in Africa and urged colonial subjects to use strikes and and boycotts to end the continent's social, economic, and political exploitation by colonial powers. So we highlight that because previous conferences had been controlled largely by the black middle class, British and American intellectuals. They had emphasized the terrible conditions, but now you had Africa joining.
- 1:57:57 So when we have unity, when we have strength, they say strength in numbers, right? So, all the while the Pan-African Congress lacked financial and political power, they helped to increase international awareness of racism and colonialism and laid the foundation for political independence of African nations. African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nyambe Azewe of Nigeria, and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya were among several attendees who subsequently led their individual countries to political independence. In May 1963, the influence of these men helped galvanize the formation of the Organization of African Unity. Now, I would like to remind you that March 6, 1957, was when the Republic of Ghana gained their independence from Britain. Then a year later, having gained their independence, they moved to help others, all right? And some truest words spoken by President Kwame Nkrumah was then, that the freedom of Ghana will mean nothing if the entire Africa is not free. So you see, in 1958, we had the first conference of the African state. So as one person became free, they helped everybody else. I'd like to highlight that although the Congo had gained independence in 1960. In 1961, Patrice Lumumba was assassinated by the Belgium
- 1:59:50 and it is just this year that they had returned the only part left of his body after his brutal murder. Just a tooth. But I want to highlight these are a number years, we're talking about generations. So what each of us does today goes to benefit the youth in front of us. We are just continuing on the shoulders of our ancestors. Of importance during the meeting on May 25th in 1963 in Ethiopia Nkrumah said that if the African countries did not leave there as one united front, one united country, then the neocolonious would take over and that's exactly what happened. All of these are situations we need to look at as we move forward to see that it's better to work together. So back in the Caribbean, we are proud to say from 1971 Ghana began to celebrate ALD. In 1975 the College of the Virgin Islands Student Progressive Organization celebrated ALD in Antigua and this was even before 12 more African countries were still struggling to attain their independence. So we have a lot to be proud of here in the Virgin Islands. In the 1980s celebrations of L.A.D. grew with the African Appraisal Workshop and in 1981 with the Caribbean Student Coalition.
- 2:01:36 Since 1983 the Pan-African Support Group has advocated for LA Day, African Liberation Day, and we are so happy that in 1989 the legislative was legislation was enacted, which makes this day a law. Those are, we've made movement, we've made steps towards independence, but our continued need to reflect on African liberation is stressed through Africa Agenda 2063. In May 2013 a 50th anniversary solemn declaration was signed during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the formation of the OAU. This declaration marked the rededication of Africa towards the attainment of the pan-African vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena.
- 2:02:53 This document, Agenda 2063, reflects that Africans have not obtained their full freedom or liberation as of today. It is Africans' blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future it is the continents it is the continents strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusion and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity self-determination freedom, progress, and collective prosperity

pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. And having said Pan-Africanism, I thank the Senate President for reminding us of our own, Edward Wilbur Blyden, father of Pan-Africanism.

- 2:03:57 so good things have come out of our small islands. The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realization that African leaders, that there was a need to refocus and reprioritize Africa's agenda from the struggle against apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent. That had been the focus with the OAU. Now, we needed to focus on inclusive social and economic development, continental and regional integration, democratic governments and peace and security among other issues, aimed at repositioning Africa to become a dominant player in the global arena. Many of us also in the and the Virgin Islands have realized that to attain true liberation, we need to have more courage and dedication. Although we are predominantly a community of African descent, we seem to be uninterested, nervous, or it's not politically correct to learn, acknowledge, reflect on, or celebrate our history. Why should we have to sue our government to have our history taught in school. If a conscious parent, okay, if we have a conscious parents giving rise to conscious, progressive, and successful families, how much more powerful would our communities be if our youth, who are definitely on the front line of oppression and violence, were given an enlightened education and a repertoire of vocational skills. As Marcus Garvey taught us, a person who has a vision of self,
- 2:05:52 has self-respect, loved God and self, and is prepared, he will be a positive, progressive member for the advancement of our race. Thus, for our liberation, we need to have that kuji shakalia, that determination, that education, and the skills to be independent. When Mozambique under Samoya Mitchell gained independence and when South Africa shed apartheid, its people were still not able to take over many businesses because it did not have the necessary skills and education. The youth in Germany are learning about diamonds and mining.
- 2:06:35 Are our youth in Africa and the Caribbean learning the same? We are on an island, we need to produce our own food, water, energy, and building resources. Our youth must learn agriculture, carpentry, masonry, electricity, solar and water power, and marine-related skills. This is where future businesses are. It does seem like we're moving in that direction, towards that goal. But we must increase the number of writers, documenters, in all genres, song, poetry, books, and plays.
- 2:07:16 We must support arts who create all forms of media which are positive, uplifting, and tell the truth about our history. As Valdemar Hill said, Our history is of a transplanted people, enslaved Africans removed by force from the original birthday place to be oppressed in an entirely new country foreign to them. Let's move in line with agenda 200 and 2063. Let's determine a status, a constitution, and meaningful liberation. Asante sana.
- 2:08:07 Thank you so much, Ms. Wallace. So we've learned the movement had many names. Liberation is an ongoing struggle. Independence is still relatively new. Unity is critical and unity is our strength and we need to demonstrate courage. We need to support honoring our heritage and initiatives to do so. Thank you, Ms. Follett. At this time, we are going to relocate the conclusion of the ceremony to the capitol grounds exterior so that we can observe the raising of the flag immediately followed by the benediction therefore we ask our senators present led by senate president novelli francis our elders followers of the movement and all others present to come with us as we descend the stairs towards the back at the end of the hall and proceed to the exterior of the building We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 2:10:46 Come on, come on. Come on, come on! Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 2:13:15 Thank you, Siddiqui! Thank you. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 2:15:15 Come on, come on. Come on, come on! We'll be right back. We'll be right back. We'll be right back.
- 2:17:45 Thank you! Siddiqui! We'll be right back. Thank you. . . . Amen. Amen. . Amen. . Amen. . . Amen. Amen. . Amen. Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. 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.

3x **Senator Alma Francis-Heyliger**
heard in this transcript as: Alma Francis Heiliger, Francis Heiliger

3x **Senator Kenneth L. Gittens**
heard in this transcript as: Kenneth L. Gittins, Senate Kenneth Gittins

- 3x **Senator Marise C. James**
the surname alone also matches: Javan James; Giovanni James Sr
heard in this transcript as: James, Maurice James
- 2x **Senator Angel L. Bocas Jr**
heard in this transcript as: Angel Bocas
- 2x **Senator Dwayne DeGraff**
- 2x **Senator Milton E. Potter**
heard in this transcript as: Potter
- 2x **Senator Myron Jackson**
- 2x **Senator Ray Fonseca**

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.

Act 5473 Act 5473 · (title not held)