



Testimony Before the
Committee on
Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth & Recreation

Friday, MARCH 27, 2015

9:00am

Honorable Myron Jackson, Chairman

**Testimony providing an update on plans for the
upcoming 2017 Centennial Transfer Day
Commemoration Activities**

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Good Morning, Chairman Jackson, members of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth, & Recreation: Senate President Neville James, Senator Sanes, Senator Blyden, Senator Francis, Senator Gittens, Senator Roach, & Senator Nelson; other Senators present; members of the Department of Education, members of the community, those in the chambers, and listening and viewing audiences.

I am Racquel Berry-Benjamin and it is a pleasure to provide testimony on this very important topic. Today, I will provide an update on plans at the Department of Education for the upcoming 2017 Centennial Transfer Day Commemoration Activities.

For the 2017 Transfer Day Commemoration Activities, the Department of Education would be focusing on an overarching theme of "IDENTITY", entitled, "Understanding My Virgin Islands Identity- A Journey across the Atlantic Triangle"

This theme was strategically and intentionally selected to ensure students understand the DNA of the United States Virgin Islands. Most importantly, it is to help them understand their history, honor their forefathers, and develop a deep love, appreciation, and pride for their Virgin Islands Heritage.

A student council will be formed to ensure representation from each Sr. High School and it will be comprised of one (1) to two (2) senior high students from each private & public school in the 2017 Graduating Classes. In addition to other things, key responsibilities of the council are to:

- Attend 2017 Centennial planning meetings on behalf of their school.
- Keep the members of the 2017 Graduating Class at their respective schools updated and informed of the progress of the planned activities for the 2017 Transfer Day Commemoration Activities
- Inform members of the 2017 Graduating Class of their role in the commemoration activities.

- Collaborate with teachers to develop, organize, implement, monitor, and report on historical and cultural activities created for the 2017 Graduating Class individually or collectively at the school.
- Update the lead person at the Department of Education on the progress and work accomplished at their respective schools.
- Represent his or her school respectively in the public at community events around the 2017 Centennial Transfer Day.

The student council approach is very important and necessary as the Department of Education values student leadership and maximizes every opportunity to provide students a chance to develop management and leadership skills.

Although the mass amount of students will engage in a number of historical and cultural classroom activities related to “Transfer Day”, there are four (4) specific actions that will allow all members of the class to participate in collectively, they are:

- Create a Blog for students to communicate and share information, ask questions, post photos and videos of their work and contributions to the Centennial Transfer Day.
- Design a commemorative T-Shirt for students to wear at a planned Cultural Day only for the members of the 2017 Graduating Class from each Sr. High School. This shirt will also serve as a keepsake for the students of this historic year.
- Display a collection of 2017 graduates work, crafts, audios, visuals, literature, research, etc. at the 2017 Transfer Day Centennial Commemoration Activity.
- With financial support from outside entities, allow the 2017 Student Council to travel to Africa, Denmark, and Washington, DC to have a 1st hand experience:
 - reviewing original artifacts & historical documents

- walking the soil of their ancestors
- touch and feel physical structures constructed by their forefathers and research their past and current purpose and function,
- Allow students to engage in meaningful discussions with students from Africa and Denmark to gain an understanding of their perspectives of the common history as well as share their USVI perspective. Additionally, use what they've learned to formulate their own conclusions on the common history respectively.
- Provide recommends to the Virgin Islands Government and Educational System on ways to better engage “21st Century Learners” in projects aimed at preserving, protecting, and promoting the history and culture of the US Virgin Islands.
- Most importantly, given the history, inspire students to take action in participating in humanitarian efforts aimed at educating young generations on the importance of love, peace, and equality for all.

The overall goal is to have young Virgin Islanders willingly and enthusiastically participating in the preservation, promotion, and practice of Virgin Islands customs and traditions. The hope is that students develop a sense of pride and deep love & appreciation for the US Virgin Islands as a result of learning its history. Thank you and I look forward to working with this body, the 2017 Commission and all others involved in the preparation of this very important historic day.