

Ronald E. Harrigan, Ed.D.  
PO Box 10971  
St. Thomas, USVI 00801  
[rharrig@gmail.com](mailto:rharrig@gmail.com) - 340-998-0920

### Testimony

**TO:** The Honorable Myron Jackson, Chair  
Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth & Recreation

**By:** Ron E. Harrigan, Ed.D.

**DATE:** May 5, 2016

**Topic:** Virgin Islands Cultural Participation in the Festival del Caribe in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba July 1 – 10, 2016

### Background

In January of this year, a verbal invitation was issued to Senator Myron Jackson of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands that was followed by a written invitation in February for the Virgin Islands for a delegation of Virgin Islanders to attend and participate in the 2016 Festival del Caribe in Santiago de Cuba. The festival is sponsored by Casa del Caribe, a cultural institution under the Ministry of Culture in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba that promotes cultural activities that include international and local participants. The Festival includes an academic colloquium and many cultural activities including, but not limited to, musical arts visual arts, the performing arts and culture bearers, etc. The festival will be held officially from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup>. Senator Jackson accepted the invitation on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands and has asked that I coordinate the trip with a staff member from the Virgin Islands Council of the Arts, the government agency that has oversight responsibility for the Virgin Islands participation in the festival. I am here today, as someone who have been in the forefront of this initiative to encourage cultural exchanges between the people of Santiago de Cuba and to share my views on the importance of this opportunity for the Virgin Islands to showcase its culture to the people of Cuba, and the rest of the world. I am asking that this body support the representation of the Virgin Islands delegation's participation in this very important Cuban and Caribbean cultural event.

### Overall Objectives

The overall objectives are for the U.S. Virgin Islands to join the rest of the Caribbean island countries at this festival that show the islands' cultural heritage and their people through participation in cultural activities and presentations in academic colloquiums. The theme of this year's festival is "The Caribbean that Unites Us and the Religions in the Region". Our cultural representation will include the St. Croix Heritage Dancers, Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights, the Guardians of Our Culture Moko Jumbies, the Pan Around the Neck Raising Stars Steel Band and the Academic presenters will include Ms. Alscess Lewis Brown, Editor of the

Caribbean Writer, Mrs. Nadine Marchena Kean, a genealogist, Senator Myron Jackson and several others. The delegation will also include a crew from WTJX Channel 12 that will document the Virgin Islands' participation in the Festival' activities.

**Cost**

Estimated cost for the Virgin Islands' delegation to participate in this year's is approximately **\$100,000**. This cost includes travel and related expenses, hotel and meals, etc.

**Conclusion**

It should be noted that the Territory is one of the last Caribbean countries to participate in this cultural festival that is in its 37<sup>th</sup> year. In a meeting that was held with the organizers of the festival at the Casa del Caribe in January of this year, we were told that it is the wish of the organizers to recognize the Virgin Islands in the 2018 festival. Last year the Bahamas was the country they honored. To this end, the organizers would like to see what the Virgin Islands have to offer with its presentation in this year's festival. We believe that the delegation that we are taking to the festival is made up of some of the best Virgin Islands' culture bearers, performers and presenters. I am asking that you support this initiative as there are tremendous benefits to be gained from exposure, not only to the people of Cuban, but to the rest of the Caribbean and the world through televised media. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today to make this presentation. If you have any questions, I am available to answer them to the best of my ability. Again, thank you.