



June 29, 2015

Honorable Senator Myron Jackson, Chairman  
Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation  
31<sup>st</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands  
Lawaetz Legislative Chambers—Lagoon Complex  
Frederiksted, St. Croix Virgin Islands 00840

Reference: Testimony in Support of Bill 31-0079—*A Resolution Petitioning the Governor to Join with the Legislature in Developing a Comprehensive Program with Focus on Education and Awareness of the Contributions of People of African Descent throughout the Caribbean—For UN International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD)*

Good Morning Honorable Senator Myron Jackson, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation of the 31<sup>st</sup> VI Legislature, to all Honorable Senators of the 31<sup>st</sup> VI Legislature in attendance and listening, Fellow Testifiers, Listeners and Viewers of this historic legislative session in the VI and abroad, and to the blessed people and our ancestors of the Virgin Islands and wider Caribbean. May the honorable legacy, tribulations, sacrifices and triumphs of our ancestors be respected as we embark on sharing institutional, community, individual, national and international endorsements for the primary purpose surrounding today's public hearing—the implementation of VI comprehensive education and awareness programs facilitated through the United Nation's official designation of the *International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD) 2015-2024* with the theme: *People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development*. This UN-designated decade is an excellent opportunity for the collective ascension, healing, intellectual enlightenment in action, reparatory justice, cultural wellness, spiritual prosperity, strategic collective organizing, power and restoration of the collective consciousness, mind, body and soul of people of African descent—globally.

I open with these words of 20<sup>th</sup> century writer, philosopher and educator the Honorable Suzanne Cesaire of Martinique: *“Why in the past have we been so unconcerned about expressing our ancestral anxiety in a direct manner? The urgency of this cultural problem escapes only those who are determined to put their hands over their eyes so as not to be disturbed from an artificial peace: and at any cost, even the price of stupidity and death.”* (Suzanne Cesaire: 1942)

I am Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina, an Indigenous Ancestral AfRaKan Daughter of the Caribbean's 21<sup>st</sup> century “African Diaspora” socialized with familial heritage roots in the Dominican Republic, Virgin Islands, Caribbean Americas, Afraka and the world. In respect, humility and strength, I am honored to share this morning's testimony as the official designee of Dr. David Hall, President of the University of the Virgin Islands and in my capacity as the director of the Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC) nestled within the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and director of the Center for the Study of Spirituality and Professionalism (CSAP) in the Office of the President at UVI.

- ✚ VICCC complements the academic pursuits of the University's Strategic Plan 2017—Pathways to Greatness;
- ✚ VICCC is designated to produce, develop and institute state-of-the-art education, research, publications, mixed media programs, conferences, academic exchanges/internships, community partnerships, interdisciplinary cultural media, economic-heritage tourism initiatives, and other resources in cooperation, collaboration and cooperative partnerships with existing organizations, institutions and agencies (*i.e. National Park Service (NPS-STX); Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN); St. Croix Unified for Community, Culture, Environment and Economic Development (SUCCEED), Inc.; University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras; University of the West Indies- Cave Hill Barbados; Rutgers University-Newark; California State University-Northridge; Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council (VIDDC)*).
- ✚ VICCC is positioned to serve as a liaison for community engagement, institutional development, intellectual preparedness, and social education on proactive issues inclusive of implementing and revising existing comprehensive educational institutional programs for the betterment of UVI, VI, Caribbean Americas and beyond.



## *Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center*

- ✚ VICCC respects the thoughtfulness and respectful endorsement by select legislative, executive and community stakeholders for multiple events hosted, presentations delivered, publications, work collaborations and proclamations shared in support of the UN-IDPAD 2015- 2024 inclusive of: VI African American Heritage Week and African Liberation Day (Governor/Lt. Governor proclamations—May 2015); VI Caribbean American Heritage Month (Governor Mapp proclamation—June 2015); Race and Reparations: VI Perspectives Symposia (March 2015); CSAP Symposia (6<sup>th</sup> Annual-April) and VICCC Symposia (3<sup>rd</sup> Annual-April); International Summit on Reparations for Blacks/African (April-2015); CARICOM Caribbean Reparations Commission (CRC); Annual Maroon Commemorations (September 2014); VI Emancipation Observances (July 2014); and much more. Special thanks are extended to the Honorable Senator Myron Jackson, Chair of the Committee on Culture, Historic Preservation, Youth and Recreation for making space in your schedule to interact, share recommendations, and exploring methods for sustainability of various centers at UVI- specifically the VICCC and CSAP.
- ✚ VICCC will be better able to strengthen and implement UVI's continued commitment and proactivity in developing, institutionalizing and maintaining comprehensive educational and social awareness programs inclusive of the contributions of people of African descent with executive and legislative branch support and endorsements streamlined through national and international governance bodies and foundations inclusive of yet not limited to the United States of America (USA), USA's Secretary of the Department of the Interior- Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA), United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Organization of American States (OAS), Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

UVI-VICCC's support of VI Legislative Bill #31-0079 was expressed in the VI Executive Proclamation for VI African Heritage Week and African Liberation Day in May 2015 which read as follows: "Opportunities for cultural education, community outreach and economic restoration interactively engage our community with the UN's IDPAD global efforts. UN IDPAD Resolution 68/237 'provides a solid framework for the United Nations, Member States, civil society and all other relevant actors to join together with people of African descent and take effective measures for the implementation of the Program of activities in the spirit of recognition, justice and development.' The Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC) and the Center for the Study of Spirituality and Professionalism (CSAP), housed within the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), the only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and Land Grant Institution in the Caribbean Americas, officially launched IDPAD during the hosting of the Race and Reparations: VI Perspectives symposia featured during UVI Charter Week, VI History and International Women's Month observances in March 2015—each of which are linked to observances of Virgin Islands African Heritage Week." Positive interactions and consensus among participants endorsing cooperative, collaborative and sustainable development in alignment with the UN-designated IDPAD's Program of Action were part of the outcome of those events with emphasis on *Caribbean African Studies* and the development of "Programs to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance faced by people of African descent, taking into account the particular situation of women, girls and young males."

*"In order to make AFRICAN STUDIES and BLACK STUDIES truly relevant, I am certain, very strongly so, African and African-American (Caribbean peoples included) educators, historians, and other writers dealing with the BLACK EXPERIENCE, must first attack and ferret-out the root-cause of the cancer of 'anti-Africanism' found in such abundance in the existing holdings in libraries, museums, and other literary depositories of the United States of America's private and public educational institutions. For herein, to me, lies the first cause for my last three volumes—BLACK MAN OF THE NILE, AFRICAN ORIGINS OF THE MAJOR 'WESTERN RELIGIONS,' and this." (Africa: Mother of Civilization- Dr. Yosef ben Jochannan: 1971)*

In 2015, the Office of the VI Governor, the Honorable Kenneth Mapp, has supported and endorsed VI African Heritage Week, African Liberation Day and VI Caribbean American Heritage Month proclamations presented from UVI's VICCC. Therefore, it appears as a natural progression with minimal resistance for the Office of the Governor to institute and implement comprehensive education and awareness programs focused on the contributions of people of African descent in alignment with the proclamation of the IDPAD 2015-2024; the study and proactive use of the IDPAD Program of Action;



## *Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center*

collaborative engagements with the UN Commission on Human Rights' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAG); effective procurement, management and security of funding through the UN for productive and efficient execution of cooperative regional and national IDPAD programs within the VI Caribbean Americas.

During the 2011 UN-designated International Year for People of African Descent (IYPAD), UVI hosted Dr. Verene Shepard of the University of the West Indies- Mona Campus in her capacity as an ambassadorial representative of WGEPAG who stated "*People of African descent have for centuries been victims of racism, racial discrimination, enslavement and denial of their rights.*" UVI-VICCC continues to develop educational colloquia, seminars and courses supporting UN-IDPAD's primary objectives at their website as (<http://www.un.org/en/events/african-descent-decade/index.shtml>):

- "*Promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African Descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;*
- *Promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies;*
- *Adopt and strengthen national, regional and international legal frameworks according to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to ensure their full and effective implementation.*"

VICCC endorses the programmatic intentions of VI Legislative Bill #31-0079 in concert with the strategic analyses, humanistic perspectives and initiatives of global support of IDPAD reflective in proactive statements like:

- ✚ "*We believe strongly that the Decade for People of African Descent will be most effective in tackling racism if it is rigorous in its analysis of where discrimination persists, and if it encourages fact-driven interventions to address it.*" Honorable U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Powers  
<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/12/20141211311932.html#axzz3eNXXQfWz>
- ✚ "*...The International Decade For People of African Descent has started!...the UN has directed the international community to pay special attention to issues relating to people of African descent during this ten year period, with a view to making appreciable progress in completing the still unfinished 'Black Agenda' of liberation, cultural and psychological rehabilitation, and development...The critical importance of the United Nations International Decade For People of African Descent becomes more and more apparent with each passing day!...It is clear that we have to bring world attention to bear on these issues; and we must act in a united way—act with power.*" Attorney David Comissiong, Chair of the Clement Payne Chambers Movement of Barbados and the Caribbean Pan African Network (CPAN). <http://www.caribflame.com/the-decade-for-people-of-african-descent-has-started/>
- ✚ "*We must remember that people of African descent are among those most affected by racism. Too often, they face denial of basic rights such as access to quality health services & education.*" Honorable Ban Ki Moon, 8<sup>th</sup> & Current Secretary General of the United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/events/african-descent-decade/>
- ✚ "*We see the International Decade for People of African Descent, with its theme, People of African Descent: recognition, justice and development, as an important space for diplomatic engagement...The Program of activities which accompanies the Decade will address many of the concerns of the African descendant communities...We can no longer accept a mere nibbling-away-at-the-edges of these concerns. Until and unless the issue of reparatory justice for slavery is addressed, due recognition, justice and development for People of African Descent will remain incomplete... we have arrived at the crossroads of new possibilities.*" Honorable Rhonda King, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ambassador to the United Nations confirming CARICOM's commitment to IDPAD.

Essentially, the increasing global support and awareness campaigns for IDPAD are linked to a host of institutionalized educational Programs and socioeconomic developments linked to restoring dignity, honor, respect, integrity, self-determination, identity and humanity of people of African descent naturally impacting all of humanity. A modification suggested for VI Legislative Bill #31-0079 is to include language to insure that policies are introduced to empower restorative justice practices with measureable outcomes, enforcement protocols and practical educational awareness reforms that a cooperative body of educators/community stakeholders may develop, implement and evaluate. The UN has several

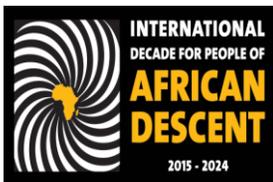


## *Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center*

foundation resources that the VI community may be able to successfully apply for and secure. UVI-VICCC continues to investigate appropriate funding opportunities that oftentimes require endorsements from legislative, executive, private sector and grassroots community representatives.

Commentary on the UN-designated IDPAD includes references to the historical narratives of the African “heritage trail” and “hydrocaust” of the TransAtlantic Enslavement industry and the global quest for 21<sup>st</sup> century reparations, restitution, repatriation and resettlement of people of African descent. Discussions and program of action initiatives will sway to the Black Lives Matter movement; to the horrific onslaught of hate launched upon 9 members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Taking action for “People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development” lends itself to exposing economic, gender, health care and educational disparities plaguing the African community/village/nation—globally. The internalized terrorism coupled with increasing police brutality giving an appearance of total disregard for the lives, welfare and spirit of people of African ascent have created ripe conditions for “ping-pong” murders like the 20<sup>th</sup> century “wild wild west”; ethnic cleansing in central/east Africa; deportations of Africans from the state of Israel; conflicts amongst the Nubians; illegal deportations/tortures of Haitian-Dominicans from within their twinned home nation of the Dominican Republic; and more are adding the spark to the importance of IDPAD’s observances. Simultaneously, there is a resurrection of African Black culture throughout Central and South America and more are linked to the protocols, action plans and more for UN-IDPAD. VICCC continues to design, implement and organize educational activities in alignment with the goals, objectives, and program of action framework that supports UN-IDPAD observances in harmony with VI Legislative Bill# 31-0079 inclusive of observances, commemorations and/or celebrations all to be researched, developed, vetted and archived for digital radio/online audio broadcasts on WUVI AM1090 “The Voice of the University” and for digital mixed media/ video broadcasts online and on VI television media (pending funding):

- ✚ January: February: African Black History Month (annual)
- ✚ March: International Women’s Month/ UN Remembrance of Victims of Enslavement and Transatlantic Enslavement Trade (25<sup>th</sup>)/ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21<sup>st</sup>)/ Transfer Day Observance (31<sup>st</sup>)
- ✚ April: UVI-VICCC Symposia & Colloquia (annual)
- ✚ May: VI African Heritage; Zamani Celebration (1<sup>st</sup>); & African Liberation Day (25<sup>th</sup>—annual/month)
- ✚ June: Global PanAfrican Remembrance for Ancestors of the Middle Passage Day (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of June/annual)
- ✚ July: VI Emancipation (July 3.1848) linked to liberation- sovereignty- reparations and power
- ✚ August: UN’s World Indigenous People’s Day (9<sup>th</sup>)
- ✚ September: Maroon Commemoration; STT Dolla fo Dolla/Queen Coziah Day (12<sup>th</sup>) & D. Hamilton Jackson Day (28<sup>th</sup>)
- ✚ October: STX Fireburn/Queen Mary Day (1<sup>st</sup>); African-Indigenous /VI-PR Friendship/Hispanic American Heritage Month (Sep15 to Oct15)
- ✚ November: Liberty Day/Labor Union Day (1<sup>st</sup>); STJ Queen Breffu Day/VI African Freedomfighters Day (November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1733)/National Native American Heritage Month/VI Indigenous Heritage Month; Cape of Arrows Observance (14<sup>th</sup>)
- ✚ December: UN International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (2<sup>nd</sup>); African Roots of St. Croix Festival/Christmas/Kwanzaa (Dec 26<sup>th</sup> – Jan1st)



UVI’s VICCC endorses and supports the institutionalization of educational programs. It is important to share that there are clear guidelines for implementing the IDPAD Program of Action most effectively and efficiently in the VI and wider Caribbean. Strategic plans requiring sustainable resources will require cooperative alignment with the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 9/14 (2008) that “entrusted the Working Group” to a) conduct studies on racial discrimination impacting African descents; b) introduce measures for a more effective justice system; c) submit recommendations for elimination of racial profiling; d) develop proposals for IDPAD programs; e)

institute well-being programs using Durban Declaration and Program of Action; f) develop long-term proposals to eliminate racism using UN system of specialized agencies inclusive of projects, collaborations and related financial/educational operational programs and more. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Racism/WGAfricanDescent/Pages/WGEPADIndex.aspx>



UVI-VICCC suggests a series of surveys of existing resources in VI executive, legislative and educational archives and collections by a cooperative council or commission to strategically implement the UN-IDPAD's Program of Action within the VI Caribbean Americas. There are linkages to VI self-determination, federal status, Transfer Centennial observances, adherence to VI educational policies on African Caribbean American history/heritage, and the holistic creation of infrastructure to successfully complete IDPAD objectives and goals. Intergovernmental relations, protocols and ethical engagements are of concern to the people of the VI. The participation of the VI in all aspects of IDPAD affairs and development has revealed that stronger marketing, publicity and community awareness of this global movement is essential in our educational institutions, social agencies, non-governmental organizations and other relevant entities. Conferences, roundtables, courses and related educational and socio-economic initiatives may include yet not be limited to the following:

1. UVI's VICCC has initiated and requires endorsement to continue implementing a series of educational colloquia, symposia and related awareness outreach programs and paradigms in alignment with UN-designated IDPAD Program of Action institutes and activities. Hosting monthly IDPAD Community/Town Meetings will be organized.
2. UVI-VICCC collaborates with community stakeholders to institute legislation and executive policies, primarily where essential, with sustainable funding sources for historic and cultural preservation of African heritage and ancestry educational programs and resources in the VI Caribbean Americas. (i.e. HEAL365© w/NPS STX)
3. Developing a series of annual tri-island economic development, heritage tourism and social education projects.
4. Integrating multicultural, transcultural, interdisciplinary and translingual shared cultural legacies of Afrakans in the Caribbean with Indigenous Native Ameridians, Asian and others across linguistic barriers.
5. Developing colloquia of IDPAD related educational seminars and programs for increased partnerships in the VI, Caribbean and beyond. (i.e. VICCC/UPRRP/UWI –November (Annual)—Islands In Between Conference)
6. UVI Admin will request and develop resourceful incentives to encourage UVI Faculty to integrate UN IDPAD resources within relevant courses inclusive of digital media and online course development expeditiously.
7. Institutionalizing UN IDPAD's Program of Action within a comprehensive land and strategic development plan in collaboration with experts, specialists and experienced homegrown professionals of African descent.

Conclusively, UVI-VICCC is prepared to collaboratively work with the legislative, executive and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders willing to work with and support VI Legislative Bill 31-0079 to insure the "*participation of the Virgin Islands in the Plan of Action and other relevant activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent.*" May we remember the works of VI ancestral cultural research stewards like: Dr. Gene K. Emanuel; Dr. Marva Sprauve Browne; Dr. Lezmore Emanuel; Dr. Edward W. Blyden; Dr. Marvin Williams; Atty. D. Hamilton Jackson; Rothschild Francis; Dr. Barbara Christian and others of Afrakan Caribbean descent and heritage to be included by name. May we move forward with viable, sustainable and resource empowered initiatives that allow this to be implemented expeditiously. On behalf of Dr. David Hall, UVI President, thanks are extended to the 31<sup>st</sup> VI Legislature for extending this invitation and opportunity to share this testimony to insure that UVI maintains its' original cornerstone objective from "*VI Legislature Act No. 862 of the Fourth Legislature of the U.S. Virgin Islands...to provide for 'the stimulation and utilization of the intellectual resources of the people of the Virgin Islands and the development of a center of higher learning whereby and wherefrom the benefits of culture and education may be extended throughout the Virgin Islands.'*" As our VI Caribbean Americas embrace the respectful ancestral legacies, collaborative partnership opportunities, sustainable funding resources available for the UN-designated *International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024*, be assured that UVI-VICCC will continue to remain prepared and committed to this quest, work and journey for a new humanity!

Shared in Culture, Heritage, Education and Spirituality,

Chenzira Davis Kahina, M.S., Ph.D.  
Director



## References and Collaborative Resources to Support Effective Implementation of VI Bill #31-0079 & UN-IDPAD:

- ✦ <http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/index.shtml>
- ✦ <http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/plan-action.shtml>
- ✦ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/gashc4084.doc.htm>
- ✦ A United Nations expert urged support today for the proposed International Decade for People of African Descent as the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) began its discussion on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the right to self-determination.
- ✦ <http://libraryresources.unog.ch/content.php?pid=497581&sid=4091035>  
United Nations Library Research Guides
- ✦ [http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/1948/1138126/Bibliography\\_African\\_People\\_Rev\\_13Jun2014.pdf](http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/1948/1138126/Bibliography_African_People_Rev_13Jun2014.pdf)  
*People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development A bibliography prepared by the UNOG Library on the occasion of the exhibition presented in the Library cyberspace*
- ✦ <http://lgdata.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/docs/1948/949990/PeopleAfricanDescent-Catalogue.pdf>  
*People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development A Journey through the UNOG Library Collection Exhibition - UNOG Library – Door 20, 1st Floor Organized in cooperation with the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent*
- ✦ [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/237](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/237)  
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 23 December 2013 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.34)] 68/237. Proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent
- ✦ [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/7](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/7)  
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 October 2013 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.7 and Add.1)] 68/7. Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade
- ✦ [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/69/19](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/69/19)  
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 November 2014 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/69/L.19 and Add.1)] 69/19. Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade
- ✦ [http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/pdf/A.RES.69.16\\_IDPAD.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/pdf/A.RES.69.16_IDPAD.pdf)  
Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 November 2014 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/69/L.3)] 69/16. Program of activities for the implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent
- ✦ <http://www.oas.org/en/default.asp> and [http://www.oas.org/en/about/what\\_we\\_do.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/about/what_we_do.asp)  
“The Organization of American States was “established to achieve among its member states an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence...The OAS uses a four-pronged approach to effectively implement its essential purposes. The Organization’s four main pillars—democracy, human rights, security, and development.”
- ✦ <http://www.oecs.org/>  
The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) formed on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1981, when seven Eastern Caribbean countries signed a treaty agreeing to cooperate with each other and promote unity and solidarity among the Members.  
<http://www.oecs.org/about-the-oecs/who-we-are/about-oecs#sthash.mw3OcvuY.dpuf>

UVI is “Historically American, Uniquely Caribbean, Globally Interactive”@ [www.uvi.edu](http://www.uvi.edu)  
 VICCC –A Center nestled within the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences at the University of the Virgin Islands  
 Preserving, Cultivating, Nurturing & Respecting Cultural Research and Technology, Educational Publications, Heritage Restoration,  
 Traditional Arts & Sciences, Inclusivity & Disabilities’ Rights, Socio-Economic Sustainability and beyond for the VI, Caribbean, Americas and the World  
 Visit VICCC online @ [www.viccc.net](http://www.viccc.net) \*\* <http://viccc.uvi.edu> \*\* <http://www.uvi.edu/academics/lib-arts-and-sciences/research-and-outreach/viccc/default.aspx>