

Attention: Honorable Norvelle Francis,
President, and Members
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

Re: Letter mailed to U. S. Secretary of the Interior

Dear Senators,

Forwarded for your information and records, please find a copy of correspondence directed to Secretary Deb Haaland whose jurisdiction is responsible for oversight and management of the Territories and Insular possessions/Islands of the United States of America.

Inasmuch as I have not yet received an official response to my concerns on behalf of the Territory of the USVI, I feel compelled to share my

concerns, respectfully, with the law making representatives of Virgin Islands of the United States of America.

Clearly, the sentiments expressed pertaining to No Land Swap, but alternatively a direct Deed of Gift to the Inhabitants/People of the Virgin Islands in perpetuity, is the solution to the island of St. John's need for a school after 106 years of ownership, by the United States of America.

The proposition to Swap Whistling Cay can only be authorized by the members of the V. I. Legislature, when authorized to do so by a court of law. The Islands and cays are considered "trust lands", subject to authorization by the judicial branch of government. During the recent past in the 1990's, Beal Aerospace's request on St. Croix was denied.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hortense M. Rowe". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Hortense M. Rowe

Former Commissioner-Dept. Of Conservation and Cultural Affairs

Hortense_m_rowe@yahoo.com

340-514-7944

Cc: Members of the 35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands



Monday 13 March 2023

Honorable Deb Haaland
U.S. Secretary of the Interior
Department of Interior, National Park Service
1849 C. Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

7022 1670 0003 0014 5235
Certified Mail Receipt

Re: Proposed land swap for St. John school-Whistling Cay/Catherineberg

Dear Madame Secretary,

Greetings from the U.S. Virgin Islands, the island of St. Croix.

Congratulations on your nomination by President Joe Biden, and confirmation to the cabinet position of Secretary, Department of the Interior. As I understand it, in the over 250 years of the Nation (USA), you represent the first enrolled member of Indian Country, a Native American. to receive this high honor. We give God Thanks and praise.

Madame Secretary, at issue presently there is a need for reasonable minds in the Department of the Interior, and the Congress of the United States of America to act favorably, after due consideration, and agree to donate the 11 acre Catherineberg parcel which is under consideration for the construction of the school, to the people of the Virgin Islands St. John District, to be held in perpetuity for the residents and used for the construction of a public school, Pre-K - 12 grades.

Notwithstanding, the on-going conversations "Pro and Con " on the issues. My personal and professional opinion is based upon the relevant historical, judicial, cultural and social factors surrounding the management, and oversight by the United States of America relative to its Colony, the Virgin Islands of the United States since March 31st, 1917, 106 years ago.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For your information, during my tenure in V.I. government, (EXECUTIVE BRANCH), February 3, 1972 to July 1975 approximately, I was honored to be nominated by the late Governor Melvin H Evans and confirmed by the 9th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, to serve in the cabinet level position of Commissioner, Department of Conservation and Cultural Affairs (DCCA), serving in the cabinet of Governors Melvin H Evans and Cyril E King.

Thankfully, from my perch in the Virgin Islands government, of over 50 years ago, I was required to interact with the Department of the Interior on a regular basis, particularly as it related to the Department's oversight of the Hess Oil Virgin Islands Refinery on environmental and conservation matters, etc.

During my term of office, as Commissioner as the Virgin Islands statutory designated official to interact with the Department of the Interior on economic and fiscal policies, we collaborated in "person in" in Washington, D. C.

The success of my missions at DOI representing the USVI was applauded by the high ranking officials. Their collective advice was profound and genuinely honest.

According to DOI officials, "Upon reflection, inasmuch as individuals of your caliber are now at the helm at the government of the Virgin Islands, we will notify Governor Melvin H Evans and the Virgin Islands Legislature, that DOI will no longer require an official visit for the purposes of your travel to Washington in the future. They, the officials, lamented, how the federal government had treated the Islands unfairly, nor considered them seriously during its historical management and oversight, referring to these actions as "treating the inhabitants and Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands as play things."

"We at (DOI) will recommend that going forward, the inhabitants manage their own affairs, and make their own mistakes, correct them and learn from them, as it should be."

PROPOSED CONSIDERATION - IN 2023:

Madame Secretary,

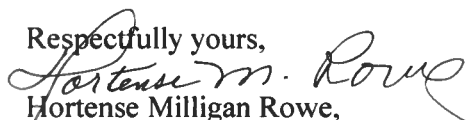
Similarly, today I respectfully urge you, the sitting Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, to do "the right thing" to advocate on behalf of the inhabitants/people of the Virgin Islands of the United States of America, who are in dire needs of land for a social and humanitarian purpose, to construct a public school, Pre-K-12 on the island of St. John.

On behalf of the inhabitants/people of the Virgin Islands of the United States of America, considering their dire social and humanitarian need, of 11 U. S. acres. I recommend the parcel of land designated as Plot No. _____ (11 acres) (NPS) Catherineberg, St. John be donated to the Inhabitants/people of the Territory of the Virgin Islands of the United States of America, to be held in perpetuity for social and humanitarian purposes.

Such conveyance is considered an extreme urgency to allow Federal Funds already designated and set aside by FEMA to be available, drawn down, and used for the purposes approved. Such action will undoubtedly address the accountability concerns of Commissioner of Education, Dionne Wells-Hedrington, to make the new school a reality by 2025.

In closing, I, Hortense M. Rowe, a humble public servant with over 60 years of private and public sector hands-on experience, pray for a favorable decision. In addition, I am available to provide "in person" testimony, if required in the future.

Respectfully yours,



Hortense Milligan Rowe,

Former Commissioner, 1972 - 1975, Department of Conservation and Cultural Affairs
Virgin Islands of the United States of America

340-514-7944

Hortense_m_rowe@yahoo.com

P.O Box 1570

Kingshill, St. Croix, Virgin Islands 00851-1570 6