



Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc.

#217 Custom House Street
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Telephone: (340) 277-4834 Email: info@chantvi.org
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February 21, 2023

The Honorable
Angel Bolques, Jr.
Senator-At-Large
35th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
Legislature of the Virgin Islands
P.O. Box 1690
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands 00802
(340) 712-2278

RE: Committee on Culture, Youth, Aging, Sports, and Parks
Committee Hearing on the 175th Emancipation Commemoration

Good Morning, Honorable Senator Angel Bolques, Jr, Member of the Committee on Culture, Youth Aging, Sports, and Parks, Members of the 35th Legislature, Staff, fellow testifiers, and the listening audience.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this convening and your interest in arguably one of the most important commemorations of the historical events that occurred on St. Croix and for the African descendant residents of the former Danish West Indies, now the Virgin Islands of the United States.

I am here as the representative of CHANT, as a resident of Frederiksted and personally, as a descendant of formerly enslaved humans who may have participated in the revolution known as Emancipation Day and who were directly impacted by the outcomes of July 3rd 1848!

Each year, I have had the opportunity to experience the events in Frederiksted that honor our Ancestors and commemorates the spirit of the Emancipation revolt. In 2018, with sponsorship from the VI Department of Tourism, CHANT partnered with the community organizations that have kept the commemoration of Emancipation alive namely **History, Tradition and Culture, United Caribbean Association (UCA), Ten Sleepless Knights** and their members and supporters to elevate the commemoration and expand the activities surrounding July 3rd – Emancipation Day. (See below)



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EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION EVENTS SCHEDULE

SUNDAY JULY 1

10AM to 4PM Whim Park
Family Fun Day

MONDAY JULY 2

4PM-7PM Buddhoe Park
Traditional Tea Party
7PM-12AM Strand Street
Frederiksted

**CONCERT: SWEET PEPPA
BAND, RENAISSANCE &
MIND BODY AND SOUL**

TUESDAY JULY 3

10AM-1PM Frederiksted
EMANCIPATION PARADE

TUESDAY JULY 3

10AM-5PM Fort Frederik
Vendors Plaza

FREEDOM ART FAIR

12PM-5PM Buddhoe Park
**YESTERDAY TODAY AND
TOMORROW**

7PM-MIDNIGHT UCA
**EVENING CELEBRATION
Honoring Emancipation
Freedom Fighters**

7PM-2AM Buddhoe Park
**TRAMP & STREET
QUADRILLE
Ten Sleepless Knights**



For this year's commemoration, CHANT has been actively participating in the planned activities for the 175th Anniversary of the Emancipation with Ten Sleepless Knights Folklife Fest 2023. CHANT will participate in the Folklife Fest Panel on U.S. Virgin Islands History and Emancipation Art Exhibit. CHANT has worked collaboratively with TSK, CMC Arts and Fort Frederik Museum to ensure that visitors to Frederiksted will be "spoiled for choice" as all venues will host Art Exhibit's highlighting Freedom and the history of Emancipation. (See below)



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FOLKLIFE FEST 2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

**JUN
24**

FOLKLIFE CULTURAL WORKSHOP

Whim Museum | 12pm-5pm

Storytelling | Moko Jumbies | Quadrille/Maypole Dancing | Cariso singing/drumming | Crucian Cooking | Woodworking

**JUN
25**

FOLKLIFE CULTURAL WORKSHOP II

Whim Museum | 12pm-5pm

Masquerade Mask Making | Traditional Quelbe and Masquerade Music | Crucian Cooking | Quadrille Headties | Woodworking

**JUN
27+29**

PANEL DISCUSSION ON U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS HISTORY + EMANCIPATION ART EXHIBIT

Caribbean Museum | 6pm-10pm

**JUN
28**

A PRESENTATION ON THE CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF QUELBE MUSIC, NARRATED BY LAWRENCE LARSEN, PH.D

Fort Frederick | 7pm-10pm

**JUN
30**

A NIGHT OF BOMBA, BAMBULA, AND AFRICAN DANCE

Fort Frederick | 7pm-10pm

**JUL
02**

FOLKLIFE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Verne Richards Veterans Park | 12pm-4pm

Sugar Hill Band from St. Kitts | Razor Blade Band from the BVI | Stanley & Ten Sleepless Knights

**JUL
03**

FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL EMANCIPATION PROGRAM

Verne Richards Veterans Park | 6pm-12am

Quelbe Tramp | Quadrille Dance Under the Stars



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I currently serve as a member of two sub-committees of the 175th Emancipation Committee namely the Education and Public Displays Committee Chaired by Akeem McIntosh and the Research and Data Collection Committee Chaired by former Sen. Myron Jackson. Both committees have had numerous meetings and are developing deliverables for July 3rd, 2023.

In both committees, I have recommended to the committee chairs that outreach to the community organizations who have carried the commemorations year after year be included. I have also recommended that funds be made available, through subgrants, to those community organizations and to cultural, heritage and arts organizations for activities/events that will explore the narrative of Freedom and Emancipation in the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean and the world. These recommendations have been forwarded to the Chair and the 175th Emancipation Committee.

As we move towards the 175th anniversary of the Emancipation of the enslaved in the Danish West Indies, it is important that we honor the spirit of resistance of all who gathered in the town of Frederiksted on the morning of July 3rd, 1848 and those who gathered at Bassin - the entrance to Christiansted, that we also honor the foundation laid to continue organizing and working for self-determination. Our ancestors showed the power of unity, a lesson that resonates today.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Franelle Gerard
Executive Director