

**Act No. 6285**

**(BILL NO. 23-0044)**

(Approved August 17, 1999)

To recognize and commemorate the St. John Slave Revolt of 1733 and to observe November 23rd as "Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day"

WHEREAS, on November 23, 1733, twelve to fourteen African slaves on the Danish West Indian island of St. Jan took the initial step in what turned out to be the benchmark event in the struggle for freedom in the now United States Virgin Islands; and

WHEREAS, this step, the conquest of Fortsberg garrison, was the first major assault on the system of chattel slavery in the Danish West Indies; and

WHEREAS, it predated the American Revolution by forty-three years, the French Revolution by fifty-six years and the great Haitian Revolution by seventy-one years; and

WHEREAS, the St. John African Revolt can be numbered among a significant group of Akan-inspired revolts that took place in the Caribbean; and

WHEREAS, the event in St. John stands very high on the rank of world events where oppressed people rallied for freedom against overwhelming odds and succeeded, even though it only lasted for four to six months; and

WHEREAS, the actual seizure constituted one of the boldest assaults on the slave institution in early Danish West Indian history; and

WHEREAS, the Africans, led by Kanta and Claes, came to the fort under the pretense of supplying the fort with firewood. All the defenders, save one, were casualties. One soldier stayed alive by hiding under the bunk. He later traveled to St. Thomas where he carried the news of Fortberg's capture; and

WHEREAS, after the garrison was secured by the African freedom fighters, Kanta and Claes raised the flag and fired several cannon shots as a signal that the battle had begun. Two main columns of Africans now headed toward strategic plantations, one traveling around the North Side attacking slave masters, burning plantations, and confiscating goods. Another column took the South Shore and operated in a similar fashion. This carefully planned revolt expanded to the entire island. The Amina-led army soon controlled many parts of the cultivated lands and their Maroon brethren controlled the hills of St. John; and

WHEREAS, by the month of April, 1734, although the Aminas were very short on ammunition, and their ranks depleted by their constant marches and clashes with the

combined forces of Danish, English, Dutch and enslaved Creoles, their struggle for freedom was still extremely strong; and

WHEREAS, on May 23, 1734, exactly six months to the day from the assault on Fortsberg, an extraordinary discovery was made by the Negro militia from St. Thomas under the command of Mingo Tamarin, a former bomba who had the complete confidence of the Danish authorities. His detachment, on a reconnoiter, discovered twenty-five bodies, nineteen African men and six women in a wooded area. The positions of the bodies and the nature of their wounds indicated that they had committed ritual death in pursuit of their freedom; and

WHEREAS, the love of liberty that these ancestral heroes of the Virgin Islands pursued in the 1733 struggle for freedom from chattel slavery is one of the singular events in West Indian/Caribbean history and the annals of mankind; and

WHEREAS, this struggle was a beacon of hope to enslaved people everywhere. It sent a clear message to the slave-holding system that the spark of freedom had been lit on these shores; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

#### SECTION 1.

The Legislature of the Virgin Islands, on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands hereby recognizes and commemorates the African Slave Revolt of 1733.

#### SECTION 2.

Title 1, Chapter 11, Virgin Islands Code is amended by adding a new Section 196 to read:

"Section 196. Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day

(a) November 23rd of each year shall be observed as 'Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day' throughout the Virgin Islands.

(b) At least fifteen days prior to Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day, the Governor of the Virgin Islands shall issue a proclamation calling upon the residents of the Virgin Islands to join together in appropriate ceremonies to reflect on this most important day in the history of the Virgin Islands.

(c) The Commissioner of the Department of Education shall be responsible for the reproduction and dissemination of information on the 1733 African Slave Revolt to all public, private and parochial schools.

(d) The Commissioner of Education shall also be responsible for organizing and publicizing events throughout public schools and the Territory for the celebration of 'Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day'.

(e) In addition to any event organized on Virgin Islands Freedom Fighters Day pursuant to subsection (d) herein, the Legislature shall hold appropriate ceremonies on St. John."

SECTION 3.

Title 14, Chapter 86, Virgin Islands Code, as added by Act No. 6182 is amended in the following instances:

(a) In Section 1723, subsection (a), strike "and determination that a person is no longer a sexually violent predator" where it appears.

(b) In Section 1724, strike subsection (f) in its entirety and substitute a new subsection (f) in lieu thereof to read as follows:

"(f) A person shall be registered for life, if that person:

(1) has 2 or more convictions or has been found not guilty by reason of insanity of a criminal offense against a minor; or

(2) has been convicted of or found not guilty by reason of insanity for a sexually violent offense or as a sexually violent predator."

(c) In Section 1727, Subsection (b), delete "be authorized to" where it appears.

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on July 21, 1999.

Witness our Hands and the Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 5th Day of August, A.D., 1999.

VARGRAVE A. RICHARDS  
President

ROOSEVELT ST. C. DAVID  
Legislative Secretary