



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00802
340-774-0001

VIRGIN ISLANDS FREEDOM WEEK

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, many of our African ancestors were living as free and self-determined citizens in democratically ruled nations before Europeans came to Africa; and

WHEREAS, our African ancestors knew from their oral and written documentation the accomplishments of African people throughout the African continent and elsewhere in the fields of navigation, science, astronomy, math, medicine, masonry, philosophy, etc.; and

WHEREAS, our African ancestors fought for their freedom from the time they were captured and never stopped planning, organizing, and fighting – whether overtly or covertly; and

WHEREAS, our African ancestors were treated as prisoners of war in prison camps, mistakenly called plantations, where some of the worst atrocities known to man or woman occurred, while the treasuries of Denmark, England, France, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy and Portugal benefitted from their free labor; and

WHEREAS, in 1833 Governor General Peter Von Scholten, the then Governor of the Danish West Indies, today the Virgin Islands of the United States, went to Denmark seeking new laws to deal with the enslaved African population – this coming on the heels of the freeing of the enslaved Africans in the English West Indies; and

WHEREAS, Governor General Peter Von Scholten was able to obtain an ordinance in 1834 that allowed an enslaved African to purchase his freedom even against the objection of his owner, provided the enslaved African paid his designated full value; and

WHEREAS, on July 28, 1847, King Christen VIII of Denmark issued a decree abolishing slavery for all “new born”, but leaving slavery in place for another twelve years; and

WHEREAS, this decree did not sit well with many enslaved Africans who realized that they would not live to see the day that they would be free; and

WHEREAS, determined to seek an earlier resolution to outlaw slavery, Moses *General Buddhoe* Gottlieb, an educated master sugar boiler from La Grange, and Admiral Martin King, his lieutenant from a mid-island plantation, planned a strategy to organize the enslaved Africans to end the oppressive system that kept them enslaved; and

WHEREAS, on July 2, 1848, a call went out to enslaved Africans to come to Fort Frederik in the town of Frederiksted, where by midnight some 8000 enslaved Africans had gathered; and

WHEREAS, fearing the worst, plantation owners and their children deserted their houses and took to the boats and ships anchored in the harbor while some of the owners and the militia barricaded themselves in the Fort, in churches and anywhere else that they considered safe; and

WHEREAS, on July 3, 1848, the enslaved Africans ripped up the whipping post and heaved it into the sea, and a call was sent out for military assistance; and

WHEREAS, when the military assistance arrived they were confronted by so large a crowd that they became petrified and took refuge behind the wall of the Fort; and

WHEREAS, upon arrival of the noon hour, Moses Gottlieb demanded freedom for all or they would burn down the town of Frederiksted and the rest of St. Croix, and the hour was extended to 4 pm; and

WHEREAS, minutes before 4 pm Governor General Peter Von Scholten, who recently had returned from St. Thomas, arrived at Fort Frederik in the town of Frederiksted, and after being briefed about the events that had occurred in the town, walked to a commanding post and announced “*All unfree in the Danish West Indies are from today Free,*” and thus on July 3, 1848, due to their heroic efforts, the enslaved Africans in Frederiksted, St. Croix succeeded in freeing all unfree persons in the Danish West Indies from the bonds of chattel; and

NOW THEREFORE, I Kenneth E. Mapp, Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, as amended, do hereby proclaim the week of June 26th to July 3rd as *Virgin Islands Freedom Week* in the Virgin Islands of the United States and I urge all people of the Virgin Islands to take a moment and reflect that had it not been for the brave efforts of our ancestors that came before us, we would have never been able to enjoy and experience the freedoms that we have today.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Government of the Virgin Islands of the United States to be affixed at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, this 26th day of June 2017.



Kenneth E. Mapp
Governor



Osbert E. Potter
Lieutenant Governor

