

BILL NO. 31-0079

Thirty-first Legislature of the Virgin Islands

March 26, 2015

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

PROPOSED BY: Senator Myron D. Jackson

1 **WHEREAS**, the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly adopted Resolution 68/237 on
2 December 23, 2013, proclaiming the period 2015 to 2024 as the "International Decade for People
3 of African Descent" with the theme "People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and
4 Development"; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the U.N. General Assembly subsequently adopted Resolution 69/16 of
6 November 18, 2014 containing the Program of Action for the International Decade, appointing
7 the U.N. High Commissioner for Human rights to coordinate the activities of the International
8 Decade, requesting States and encouraging the wider international community including
9 organizations of people of African descent, national human rights institutions and other
10 stakeholders, to develop and implement specific action-oriented activities in their areas of
11 competence; and

1 **WHEREAS**, the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent
2 followed on from the earlier adoption by the U.N. General Assembly of Resolution 64/169 of
3 December 18, 2009 proclaiming the year 2011 as the International Year of Peoples of African
4 Descent, the adoption of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 66/144 of December 19, 2011
5 encouraging the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to develop a program
6 of action for an International Decade for People of African Descent, and the adoption of Human
7 Rights Council Resolution 21/33 of September 28, 2012 endorsing the program of action and
8 forwarding it to the General Assembly for its consideration; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the main objective of the International Decade is the promotion, respect and
10 fulfillment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African descent, as
11 recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the International Decade is intended to focus on specific objectives
13 including (a) the strengthening of national, regional and international action and cooperation in
14 relation to the full enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights by people of
15 African descent and their full and equal participation in all aspects of society; (b) the promotion
16 of a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people
17 of African descent to the development of societies; and (c) the adoption and strengthening of
18 national, regional and international legal frameworks in accordance with the Durban Declaration
19 and Program of Action, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of
20 Racial Discrimination; and

21 **WHEREAS**, the International Decade is an outcome of the Durban Declaration and
22 Program of Action of the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination,
23 Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in which the Government of the Virgin Islands participated

1 as an official observer and addressed the General Assembly on relevant issues on September 5,
2 2001; and

3 **WHEREAS**, the significant hardships endured by the enslaved Africans during the
4 period of European colonial rule which precipitated the 1733 revolution on St. John, the
5 successful 1848 Emancipation Insurrection, the 1878 Fireburn on St. Croix, and the 1892 Coal
6 Workers' Strike on St. Thomas are significant milestones in the history of the Virgin Islands, and
7 are duly recognized; and

8 **WHEREAS**, the transfer of the former Danish West Indies to the United States of
9 America through the Treaty of Cession of 1917 confirmed that the civil rights and political status
10 of the inhabitants of the islands shall be determined by the United States Congress; and

11 **WHEREAS**, the enormous contributions to the development of the Virgin Islands by
12 those persons, mainly of African descent, who migrated to the territory from countries of the
13 wider Caribbean, and who endured significant hardships as a result of prevailing U.S.
14 immigration and labor laws, and who came to form an integral part of the Virgin Islands society,
15 are duly recognized; and

16 **WHEREAS**, the majority of the people of the inhabitants of the Virgin Islands are
17 people of African descent; Now, therefore,

18 ***Be it resolved by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:***

19 **SECTION 1.** The Governor of the Virgin Islands, the Honorable Kenneth E. Mapp, is
20 respectfully petitioned to join the Legislature of the Virgin Islands in developing a
21 comprehensive program at the territorial level with focus on education and awareness raising on
22 the contributions of people of African descent consistent with the program of action of the
23 International Decade for People of African Descent and in engaging with other Caribbean

1 countries and territories to maximize Virgin Islands participation in activities and programs at
2 the regional level in implementation of the Plan of Action of the International Decade.

3 **BILL SUMMARY**

4 This bill is a resolution to provide for the participation of the Virgin Islands in the Plan of
5 Action and other relevant activities of the International Decade for People of African Descent.

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10 **BR15-0215/February 23, 2015/AA**

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