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Daily News
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Contact Us

**Executive Editor
& Chief Executive Officer**

Jason Robbins
774-8772 ext. 307
jrobbins@dailynews.vi

Editor Emeritus

J. Lowe Davis
774-8772 ext. 350

News Tips

774-8772 ext. 340

Fax: 776-0740

Sports

774-8772 ext. 377

Fax: 776-0740

Opinions

774-8772 ext. 306

Classifieds

AVAILABLE 24 HOURS

714-2222

Fax: 774-6116

Advertising

St. Thomas

774-8772 • Fax: 774-6886

St. Croix

773-4428 • Fax: 719-3000

St. John

715-2610 • Fax: 774-6886

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Mail

9155 Estate Thomas
St. Thomas, VI 00802

E-mail

dailynews@vipowernet.net

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Farrakhan urges Emancipation Day through to work to be truly free through activism

By CHRISTINE LETT
Daily News Staff

ST. CROIX — This year's celebration of the 1848 Emancipation was one of deep reflection of the sacrifices made 160 years ago to the day by enslaved Africans to win freedom from the Denmark, the islands' colonial power.

On Thursday, on the same ground where freedom from slavery was won on July 3, 1848, keynote speaker Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, told Virgin Islanders that while slaves were emancipated the work to be truly free was not yet done.

Emancipation, in Latin, simply means a freeing of the hands, he said. It does not mean freedom from the master, Farrakhan said.

The activism, which calls for deep sacrifices, skipped an entire generation because the sacrifice is not yet "real," he said. Many have not experienced true freedom — the ability to be independent, to fulfill their own destinies. In today's world this means owning your own business, growing your own foods, Farrakhan said.

Farrakhan called for activism in this generation "to make the work that took place 160 years ago real."

"Freedom is never given," he said. "Freedom is earned."

He called on leaders in the community to continue the fight for freedom from mental slavery — from the mentality of looking to others for answers and assistance.

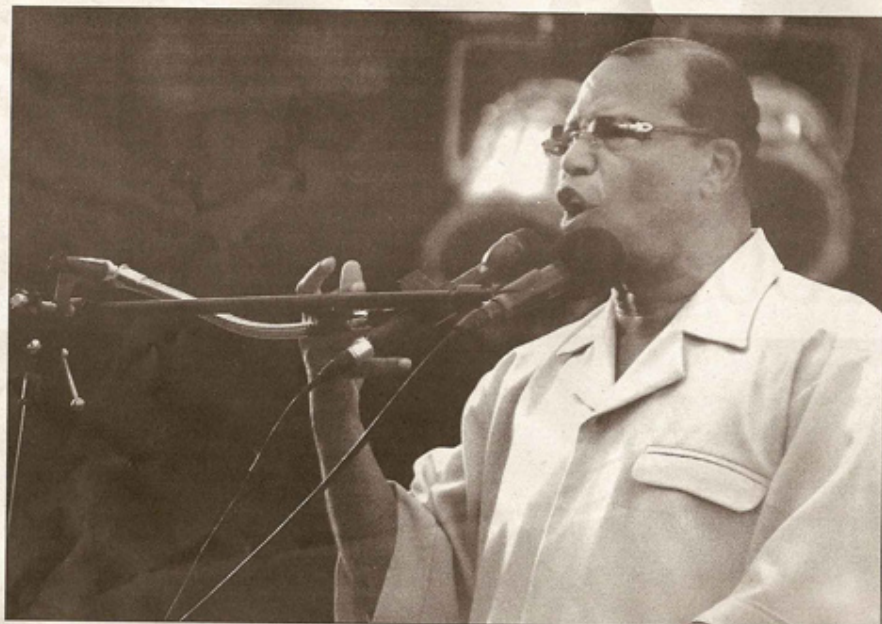
Hundreds gathered at Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted and waited patiently for hours Thursday to hear Farrakhan speak. He arrived at Buddhoe Park by police escort.

The area was already heavily manned by members of the Nation of Islam, V.I. police and other security. Farrakhan was the final speaker at Thursday's event and hundreds who scattered throughout the park rushed to the stage as he appeared.

The program began a couple of hours behind schedule. Inclement weather delayed flights bringing Majestrada Negra of Puerto Rico, a drum and dance group scheduled to take the stage at 1 p.m. Charles Williams, a Carib chief from Dominica, did not make program at all after his flight was cancelled.

The program began about 3 p.m. with the traditional blowing of the conch shell. Myron Jackson offered the libation, giving reverence and thanks to the ancestors by pouring water taken from Creque Dam. He spoke both in English and Yoruba.

Pinones-based Majestrada Negra followed with a performance of the bomba, which in Puerto Rico



Daily News Photo by CRISTIAN SIMESCU

Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan speaks during the 160th Emancipation Day Celebration program Thursday afternoon on King Street at Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted.

Many have not experienced true freedom — the ability to be independent, to fulfill their own destinies. In today's world this means owning your own business, growing your own foods, Minister Louis Farrakhan said.

was used by slaves to incite rebellion. A youth group, accompanied by drummers and singers, danced in brightly-colored costumes.

Pinones is the only Afro-Caribbean community in Puerto Rico. It was created in the 1800s by maroons — slaves who escaped from their masters.

Maricruz Rivera, executive director of Corporacion Pinones Se Intera which created Majestrada Negra, said the brightly colored costumes signify the hope the maroons felt in their new community. It moves away from the colonial-style white garment that has become known as the traditional wear in Puerto Rico, she said.

Also, local historian Mario Moorhead gave his historical perspective of the atrocities enslaved Africans endured under the heavy-handed rule of the Danish colonizers. He also described the events leading to the 1848 Emancipation.

The Emancipation re-enactment was absent in this year's program. Since the Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow Committee created the annual celebration, the Emancipation re-enactment has been the highlight.

Committee president Mary Moorhead said lack of funding prevented the organization from

hiring a group to perform the re-enactment. She said the Committee received only half of its appropriated funding, \$60,000 from the V.I. government, to put on its events.

The 1848 Emancipation is considered the most historic moment in V.I. history. On that day, all slaves in the territory were freed.

In the summer of 1847, Denmark announced that slavery would be abolished in the Danish West Indies in 1848 for all newborns, and 12 years later for adults. Instead of appeasing slaves, the announcement angered them; they were growing increasingly rebellious having heard reports that slaves on neighboring islands had been granted their freedom.

Organized by a master sugar boiler named Moses Gottlieb and his comrade Martin King, the slaves on plantations throughout the West End of the island carefully orchestrated a march on the town of Frederiksted at dawn on July 3, 1848.

On that morning, with the blowing of conch shells and the beating of drums, thousands of slaves marched into Frederiksted and gathered at Fort Frederik to demand their freedom. They were

led by Gottlieb, who rode into town on horseback in a red Danish military uniform. He later became known as "General Buddhoe."

The slaves stood before the Danish military at Fort Frederik and demanded their freedom by noon, or else they would burn the town to the ground. The military sent word to Governor-General Peter von Scholten at Government House in Christiansted. No word came by the noon deadline and Buddhoe agreed to extend the deadline to 4 p.m.

Von Scholten arrived in Frederiksted minutes before the 4 p.m. deadline. Upon seeing the mob, he climbed onto the walls of the fort and emancipated the slaves from that day onward.

"All unfree in the Danish West Indies are from today free," he declared.

The Emancipation celebration ends today with a newly created Youth Independence Day activity beginning at 2 p.m. at King Street, Frederiksted and a fireworks display at 8 p.m. The Stroka Band is slated to perform along with the St. Croix Rising Stars Orchestra and other entertainers.

— Contact Christine Lett at 774-8772 ext. 456 or e-mail clett@dailynews.vi.

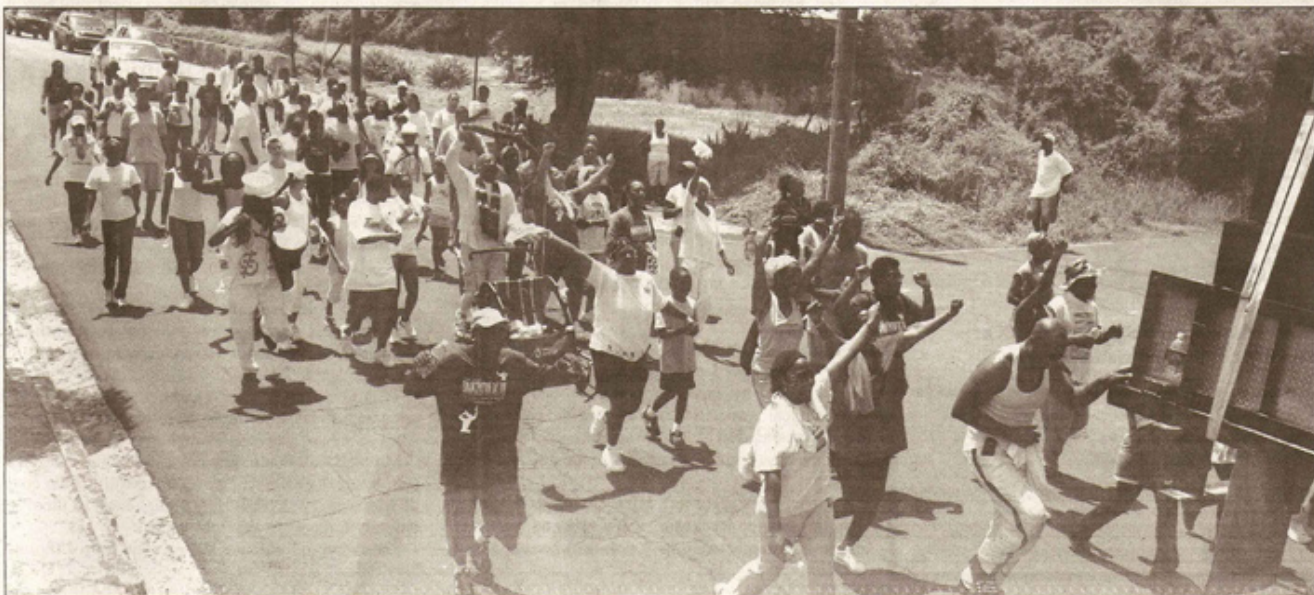


Daily News Photos by CRISTIAN SIMESCU

Members of Majestrado Negra perform during the 160th Emancipation Day Celebration program Thursday afternoon on King Street at Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted.



Majestrado Negra performs in symbolic costumes and on traditional percussion instruments on Thursday.



An enthusiastic crowd joins the Fort to Fort Emancipation Walk in Frederiksted on Thursday morning. The walk started at Fort Christiansvaern in Christiansted and ended about six hours later at Fort Frederik. About 400 participated in the walk at various stages along the way. This is the seventh year the walk, organized by Sen. Terrence Nelson, has been part of the Emancipation Day Celebration.