

Islanders walk for freedom



St. Croix Avis



USVI 164th YEAR

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Dancers with Grupo Majestad Negra perform during the Emancipation Day Commemorative Program Thursday in Frederiksted.

Kristin Duncan

Shackles broken

VI celebrates Emancipation Day

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Louis Farrakhan, minister with the Nation of Islam, talks about the importance of knowing your history during his speech.



After 14.6 miles walkers enter Frederiksted during the Fort-to-Fort Emancipation Walk.

Kristin Duncan

WALK:
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tened around his neck, marched along with the group as he provided running commentary through the speakers with a microphone, inspiring the walkers along the way.

As the group could see the Fort Frederik bandstand in the distance while travelling down King Street in Frederiksted, the sense of accomplishment was evident as they began tramping down the street to the beat of the music. They arrived at Fort Frederik just after 11 a.m.

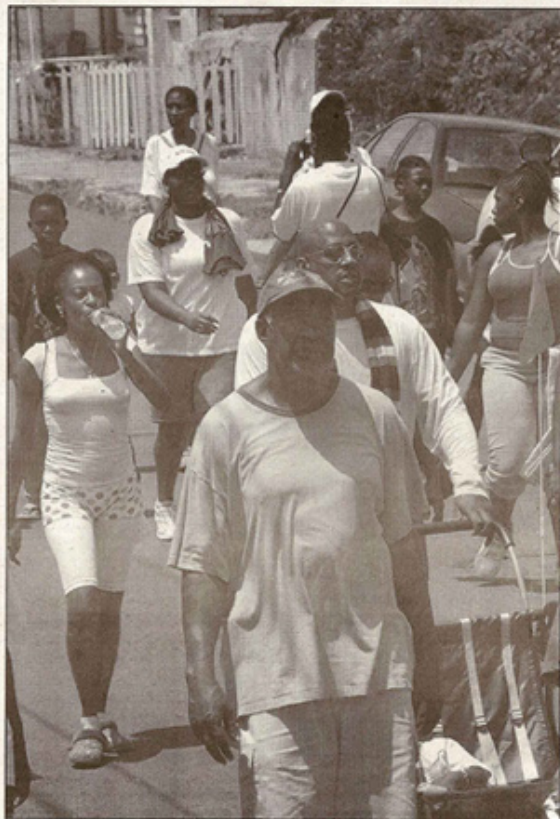
"To the fort, to the fort," shouted St. Croix native Raymond Hector as the crowd arrived at Budhoe Park.

Hector has been participating in the fort-to-fort walk ever since the first year. He walked the entire distance Thursday.

"I do it every year," he said. "It just builds up energy in me — a tremendous day."

As the group arrived at Fort Frederik and entered through the gates, Nelson encouraged them to touch a chain hanging from the door to symbolize the release from the shackles of slavery as they chanted, "freedom." Nelson ended the journey with prayer.

"It's a good feeling; great spirit of the past bringing us into the future," said Empress Nataki after completing the walk. "Freedom is ours; there must be liberation."



Many people took part in the Fort-to-Fort Emancipation Walk Thursday.



Kristin Duncan

Khadijah and Maria Farrakhan, wife and daughter of Louis Farrakhan, listen in as the minister for the Nation of Islam speaks during the Emancipation Day Commemorative Program Thursday in Frederiksted.

FREEDOM:
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But Moorhead also said that what is typically taught about the emancipation is that Gov. General Peter Von Scholten handed over freedom in an act of, more or less, of humanity — not to mention a possible affair with one of slaves.

However, he said that not only was the fort severely outmanned by more than 10,000 gathered slaves, but that they had also replaced the barrels of military gunpowder with sand prior to organizing the storm.

That, Moorhead said, was the reason behind the governor's proclamation "from this day onward all unfree in the Danish West Indies are free."

The commemoration kicked off with a call to order with a ceremonial conch shell blowing by Wilfred "Juni Bomba" Allick, Pamela Richards and Betty Wilson.

The ceremonial libation was performed Myron Jackson.

Grupo Majestad Negra, a hand drum-driven singing and dance troupe from Puerto Rico, performed before Moorhead's address.



Kristin Duncan

Dancin'

Participants of the St. Mary's School Big Island Adventure Camp take part in their parade celebrating Emancipation Day and the Fourth of July in Christiansted Thursday.