

Executive Summary

The Virgin Islands Youth Advocacy Coalition, Inc. (VIYAC) is a broad-based coalition of organizations and individuals committed to increasing the political and civic involvement and overall voter participation of Virgin Islanders, ages 14 to 30. In conducting this updated assessment, VIYAC submits this Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to highlight ongoing concerns regarding the United States' lack of implementation of recommendations pertaining to people of African descent, as well as the persistent denial of fundamental rights in Virgin Islanders' exercise of their political, social, economic, cultural, and educational rights—most centrally, the inalienable right to self-determination. This report builds on the 2020 VIYAC UPR submission and incorporates current scholarship, updated international resolutions, and the most recent advocacy by recognized experts in the fields of decolonization and Caribbean governance.

VIYAC expresses grave and continuing concern over the political status of the Virgin Islands of the United States as a Non-Self-Governing Territory (NSGT) and unincorporated territory of the United States. The territory is predominantly comprised of persons of African descent—76 percent according to the most recent U.S. Census data—and the colonial status of the Virgin Islands has materially impeded the ability of its people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. This right is firmly established in Article 73 of the United Nations Charter [1], enshrined within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) [2], the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) [3], and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) [4].

Per Ankh, Inc. (Per Ankh) is a dedicated charitable and community service organization committed to the comprehensive upliftment, welfare, and positive advancement of communities on local, regional, and global scales. Deeply rooted in St. Croix, the Virgin Islands, and the broader Caribbean Americas, the organization focuses its core mission on the people of African descent. Per Ankh vigorously addresses the persistent denial of fundamental human rights—most notably, the inalienable right to self-determination and the vital exercise of political, social, economic, cultural, and educational rights.

At its core, Per Ankh, Inc. operates as a nurturing sanctuary for learning, healing, and profound transformational and institutional growth. The organization is livicated to providing a diverse array of essential resources, including educational, spiritual, cultural, environmental, and transitional health services. Through the implementation of holistic therapies, community capacity building initiatives, prevention treatments, and the active promotion of healing living arts and sciences, Per Ankh strives to foster sustainable communities and ensure peace, reconciliation and humanitarianism globally. This holistic and transformative approach is beautifully encapsulated in their guiding philosophy: CHATS4LIFE©, an acronym representing Culture, Healing, Arts, Technology, and Spirituality for Life, Inspiration, Freedom, and Education.

By seamlessly integrating the critical elements of CHATS4LIFE©, Per Ankh creates and reintegrates historic, sustainable, technologically sound, culturally sensitive and life-affirming frameworks. These supportive environments are meticulously designed to honor the deep interconnectedness of all existence and inspire positive, lasting transformation guided by principles which emphasize truth, justice, order, reciprocity, divine righteousness, harmony, and balance. The organization directly supports and champions programs that educate, empower, heal, transform, and uplift its people. In doing so, Per Ankh is actively creating lasting legacies of vital cultural preservation, harmonious living, and transformative human rights, inclusive of self-determination. A significant emphasis is continuously placed on respecting, elevating, and preserving Afrakan Caribbean Indigenous contributions to historic narratives, ecosystems, and authentic sovereignty in societal governance institutions, thereby building robust community resilience for generations to come.

The strategic focus and operational efforts of Per Ankh, Inc. encompass three primary pillars:

- **Cultural Heritage & Creative Arts:** The organization is passionately dedicated to preserving invaluable ancestral wisdom and educating communities through dynamic cultural engagement and meaningful artistic expression.
- **Technology & Media Literacy:** Per Ankh actively bridges the critical gap between historical legacy and modern innovation, thoughtfully equipping individuals with the necessary tools, skills, and knowledge to thrive in the future.

- **Sustainable Humanitarian Development:** By actively fostering humanitarian collaborative partnerships, the organization robustly supports the economic, social, and environmental resilience of families, local neighborhoods, and broader communities.

Per Ankh's mission is to provide a sanctuary for learning, healing, and growth by offering educational, cultural, and spiritual resources that foster sustainable communities and holistic wellness globally. Per Ankh's vision is to create a legacy of life, inspiration, freedom, and education for generations to come, grounded in the wisdom of our ancestors and the innovative spirit of the present.

In summary, Per Ankh, Inc. stands as a vital beacon of empowerment, peace with reconciliation, ancestral sovereignty in contemporary times, cultural decolonization, and sustainable institutional development. By confronting historical injustices and providing comprehensive, culturally grounded resources, the organization is actively shaping a brighter, more equitable future where the heritage, rights, and well-being of AfRaKan descent communities are celebrated, protected, and sustained for generations to come.

The Virgin Islands continues to be governed by the Revised Organic Act of 1954, a **UNITED STATES (US)** federal law unilaterally established by the United States Congress, which functions as the de facto constitution of the territory [5]. This arrangement forces the Virgin Islands to uphold **US** federal laws that discriminate against its own population through the denial of full citizenship—a direct conflict with both the **US** federal and **territorial** laws that govern the territory and with the international human rights obligations of the United States.

This updated report incorporates the scholarship and advocacy of leading experts whose work is indispensable to any contemporary analysis of USVI decolonization: **Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina**, Director of the Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center and Adjunct Professor at the University of the Virgin Islands, Past President of the Caribbean Studies Association, and President of Per Ankh and Genevieve Whitaker, J.D., President and Co-Founder of VIYAC, 2016 Fellow for the International Decade for People of African Descent and former Senator, 34th Legislature of the Virgin Islands. Their research provides a rigorous, internationally recognized analytical framework for understanding the democratic deficit inherent in the current federal-territorial relationship and for charting a course toward genuine self-determination.

A. Background and Framework

1. Scope of International Obligations

The United States has ratified two international instruments central to the fight against racial discrimination: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The United States has also signed, but not fully ratified, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The ratification of these instruments would substantially enhance the protection and recognition of the rights of people of African descent, including those in the Virgin Islands.

Critically, the United States maintains standing declarations treating the ICCPR, ICERD, and the Convention against Torture as non-self-executing, rendering them largely unenforceable in domestic courts [6]. As documented by the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent following its January 2016 visit to the United States, courts are generally reluctant to consider international human rights treaties as independent legal arguments, meaning that human rights treaties do not give rise to individually enforceable rights in U.S. courts [6]. This legal

architecture is particularly harmful to the people of the Virgin Islands, who have no other avenue to vindicate their rights to self-determination and political equality.

The United States has not signed or ratified any human rights treaties that would allow its citizens to present individual complaints to UN human rights treaty bodies or to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. However, the United States is subject to the individual complaints procedure of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) as a member of the Organization of American States (OAS) and is bound by the provisions of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man [7].

2. The Decolonization Framework and the Democratic Deficit

The most authoritative international framework governing the political status of the Virgin Islands is found in Chapter XI of the UN Charter, UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960 (the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples), and Resolution 1541 (XV) of 1960, which defines the legitimate political options available to non-self-governing peoples [8] [9].

Dr. Carlyle G. Corbin has argued extensively before the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24) and **UN Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)**, the failure to achieve progress on decolonization over six decades reflects the emergence of what he terms "**dependency governance**"—a modernized variant of colonialism that presents itself as a legitimate form of democracy while maintaining a profound democratic deficit [10]. In his 2024 UN discussion paper, *Modalities for Implementation of the United Nations Decolonisation Agenda*, presented at the UN Caribbean Regional Seminar in Caracas, **Venezuela** Dr. Corbin documented that the UN roster of NSGTs has remained virtually unchanged at 17 territories since Timor-Leste achieved independence in 2002, despite four successive International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism (IDEC) since 1990 [11].

"Dependency governance is presented as a legitimate form of democracy—only needing to be 'reformed and modernised.' This results in minimal or no engagement by administering Powers with the UN decolonisation process."
— Dr. Carlyle G. Corbin, *Modalities for Implementation of the United Nations Decolonisation Agenda* (2024) [11]

Dr. Corbin's diagnostic framework, the **Self-Governance Indicators (SGI)** tool, provides a systematic methodology for assessing the degree to which a territory has achieved a "Full Measure of Self-Government" (FMSG)—the standard required for removal from the UN NSGT list [10]. His 2023 UN discussion paper, *Preparation for Self-Government of Caribbean and Pacific Non-Self-Governing Territories*, offers a comparative analysis demonstrating that the Virgin Islands, like other Caribbean NSGTs, remains far from meeting this standard [12].

The 1977 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/32/31 on the Question of the Virgin Islands specifically called upon the United States, in cooperation with the territorial government, to "provide the necessary advice to the Commission on the Status and Federal Relations in its review of the residency requirement for those eligible to participate in a genuine exercise of the right to self-determination in the United States Virgin Islands" [13]. Decades later, this directive remains unimplemented.

The most recent UN General Assembly Resolution on the Question of the United States Virgin Islands, **A/RES/79/112**, adopted on 4 December 2024, reaffirms that all available options for self-determination are valid as long as they are in accordance with the freely expressed wishes of the people of the Virgin Islands. The resolution *expresses concern* that more than 60 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the Virgin Islands,

remain [14]. It requests the Special Committee to continue to examine the question of the United States Virgin Islands and to report thereon to the General Assembly.

This international concern was amplified in February 2026, when UN Secretary-General António Guterres, opening the 2026 session of the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24), urged renewed commitment to completing the "unfinished business" of ending colonial rule:

"This Organization was created as a place where nations could meet as equals, not as rulers and ruled. The legacy of colonialism has left profound scars through deeply rooted mechanisms of economic exploitation, as well as in the form of racism, inequality, and persistent exclusion from the decision-making bodies." — UN Secretary-General António Guterres, February 16, 2026 [15]

3. The Insular Cases and Racially Discriminatory Jurisprudence

The legal architecture of U.S. territorial governance is rooted in the "Insular Cases," a series of early 20th-century Supreme Court decisions that established the doctrine of "unincorporated territories" to which the U.S. Constitution does not fully apply. These decisions were explicitly grounded in racial animus, labeling inhabitants of newly acquired territories as "savages of an alien race" and "unfit for citizenship" [16]. This jurisprudence has been applied to the Virgin Islands and other territories for over a century, providing the legal basis for **excluding** territorial residents from the right to vote for the President, from full voting representation in Congress, and from equal access to federal benefit programs.

In a 2007 federal case, *Krim M. Ballentine v. United States*, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals acknowledged that the Virgin Islands is "one of only seventeen territories remaining in the world today that are classified under international law as non-self-governing territories" and is "the subject of a continuing United Nations campaign to eradicate colonialism as a matter of international human rights" [17]. However, the court ruled that it lacked jurisdiction over the plaintiff's ICCPR claim, as the Senate had declared the treaty's substantive provisions non-self-executing, and dismissed the case [17].

The 2023 joint NGO shadow report to the UN Human Rights Committee, *Towards Decolonization & Repair: U.S. Territories, Self-Determination, and the Incompatibility of Colonialism and Human Rights*, submitted by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), Blue Ocean Law, and the ACLU-Puerto Rico, provides the most comprehensive recent international legal analysis of this issue [18]. The report argues that U.S. colonial rule over its territories violates the ICCPR's guarantees of self-determination and political participation and calls on the Human Rights Committee to hold the United States accountable for its obligations under Article 73(e) of the UN Charter regarding the administration of NSGTs [18].

Encouragingly, there are signs of a shift in jurisprudential opinion. In 2022, Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch issued a concurring opinion in *United States v. Vaello-Madero*, calling for the overruling of the Insular Cases, a position joined by Justice Sonia Sotomayor [19]. In November 2025, SCOTUS blog reported that conservative justices were again questioning the foundation of U.S. colonial rule, suggesting that a future Supreme Court challenge to the Insular Cases may be viable [19]. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights' February 2024 information brief on the status of civil rights in the U.S. Virgin Islands further documented the ongoing harms to civil rights stemming from the territory's colonial status [20].

Building on this momentum, VIYAC President Genevieve Whitaker—an alumna of Stetson University College of Law- has bridged legal scholarship and legislative action to dismantle this colonial framework. In March 2024, she served as the Keynote Speaker for the Stetson Law Review Symposium, "[Territorial Law Across the Curriculum](#)," an event held in collaboration with the Florida Bar and the Virgin Islands Bar Association to educate the legal community on the impact of the Insular Cases. Furthermore, as a member of the 34th Legislature, she sponsored [Resolution No. 1912 \(Bill No. 35-0104\)](#), which formally petitioned the U.S. Congress to repudiate the Insular Cases and their 'separate and unequal' doctrine, asserting that such jurisprudence has no place in modern American law

B. Public Awareness, Cultural Education, and the Decolonization Imperative

1. The Absence of Political Status Education

A critical and persistent barrier to self-determination in the Virgin Islands is the systemic absence of political status and decolonization education in the territory's public and private schools. Despite the passage of a 1983 local law—Title 17, Section 41(c) of the Virgin Islands Code—requiring children to learn Virgin Islands and Caribbean history and culture from Kindergarten through 12th grade, comprehensive curricula remain largely unimplemented [21]. This failure has been the subject of ongoing civil rights litigation, including a Writ of Mandamus filed by family members of public school students and taxpayers against the Virgin Islands government to compel the necessary education reforms [22].

This case, referenced in the 2020 UPR Report, has since concluded with a landmark ruling: <https://newsfeed.wtjx.org/2024-06-26/superior-court-finds-vide-has-failed-to-teach-vi-history-as-required-by-law-gives-a-year-to-comply>. In June 2024, the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands found that the Department of Education (VIDE) neglected its legal mandate under **17 V.I.C. § 41(c)**. The court granted the department one year to achieve full compliance, turning a long-standing grievance into a court-ordered civil rights mandate.

The consequences of this educational deficit are measurable and severe. A March 2026 report by the University of Michigan's Center for Racial Justice, based on survey data from 696 residents across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, found that while 65 percent of respondents believe it is important for the territory to ratify its own constitution, 63 percent reported little or no awareness of the ongoing Sixth Constitutional Convention, including 38 percent who had not heard of it at all [23]. The report's authors concluded that "for there to be a truly democratic process, outreach to these demographics is very important. The burden should not be on them to actively seek information; it should be made accessible" [23].

This awareness gap is not accidental. It is the predictable consequence of a colonial educational system that has historically marginalized local history, culture, and political status from the curriculum. As Dr. Malik Sekou, Professor of Political Science at the University of the Virgin Islands, has documented, hesitation among Virgin Islanders toward political status change is produced by: (1) a lack of resources to help educate the public; (2) limited opportunities for education on political status and its implications; and (3) the pervasive belief that a shift in political status does not guarantee decolonization in an unequal world [24].

2. Cultural Sovereignty as Decolonization

The work of Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina represents the most sustained and institutionally embedded effort to address the cultural dimensions of decolonization in the Virgin Islands. As the Inaugural Founding Director of the **Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC)** at the University of the Virgin Islands, Dr. Kahina has built an institutional vehicle for preserving and asserting cultural sovereignty as a prerequisite for political self-

determination [25].

Dr. Kahina's intellectual framework rests on the proposition that decolonization is not merely a political or legal process but a cultural and epistemological one. In her ethnodocumentary *Queens of the Virgins: Ancestral Visions in Contemporary Virgin Islands Folklore and Drama*, she documents the living ancestral traditions of the Virgin Islands as evidence of an unbroken cultural sovereignty that colonial governance has sought to suppress [26]. Her work argues that the recovery and transmission of this ancestral knowledge is an act of political resistance and a foundation for genuine self-governance.

As Immediate Past President of the **Caribbean Studies Association (2022–2023)**, Dr. Kahina advanced a regional decolonization agenda under the theme "Clear deh Road Ayo! We are Transforming Our Caribbean," connecting the USVI's struggle to the broader Caribbean and Pan-African movements for self-determination [27]. Her role as an Executive Council Representative of the **CARICOM Reparations Commission** further situates the USVI's decolonization within the international reparations movement, arguing that the harms of slavery and colonialism are inseparable from the territory's current political status [28]. In her 2021 testimony before the Virgin Islands Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development, Dr. Kahina made the direct connection between educational failure and colonial perpetuation explicit:

"We cannot talk about Black empowerment and decolonization of the territory when we don't even have a program that assesses the colonial history of the territory." — Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina, Testimony before the V.I. Senate, June 2021 [29]

Dr. Kahina's practical contributions to educational decolonization include her collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Education on the **Kallaloo Framework**, an instructional methodology that positions Virgin Islands cultural heritage as the central organizing principle of all K-12 education, not merely a supplementary subject [30]. This framework, embedded within the Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education (DVICE), represents a concrete institutional response to the educational deficit identified in this report.

As a candidate for the Fifth Constitutional Convention in 2007, Dr. Kahina articulated a vision of constitutional self-determination rooted in cultural identity:

"Our lives as Virgin Islanders are interconnected with our collective maturity to make this 5th constitutional convention our final one as we progress beyond being a non-self-governing unincorporated US territory. The VI's political maturity has advanced from civil rights into human rights that support self-determination and self-governance in accordance with US laws and UN resolutions." — Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina, May 30, 2007 [31]

3. The Sixth Constitutional Convention and the Road Ahead

The Virgin Islands is currently engaged in its Sixth Constitutional Convention, VIYAC's President Genevieve Whitaker, and former Senator, who is a prime sponsor of the legislation establishing the Sixth Constitutional Convention. A first draft of a proposed constitution was completed on January 31, 2026, and is currently under review by contracted legal counsel to ensure alignment with the U.S. Constitution. A territory-wide referendum on ratification is anticipated for July 3, 2027 [23].

The University of Michigan's 2026 report identifies both an opportunity and a warning: while public support for a constitution is strong, the convention has conducted "essentially no meaningful public outreach" [23]. Sixth Constitutional Delegate and Secretary Imani Daniel has publicly acknowledged this deficit and committed to mass public engagement through town halls, school presentations, and online materials in the months ahead [23].

VIYAC urges the international community to recognize that the success of this constitutional process depends critically on the kind of culturally grounded, decolonization-centered education that Dr. Kahina and her colleagues have been advocating for decades. A constitution drafted without genuine, informed public participation cannot **contribute to a genuine process of self-determination and to the ultimate decolonization of the territory through an internationally recognized political status option of absolute political equality under international law.** *(Note: The attainment of a territorial constitution does not constitute self-determination as the USVI will remain an unincorporated non-self-governing territory even with a constitution and will remain subject to the "territory and other property" clause of the US Constitution.)*

C. Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanisms

As it pertains to the United States' cooperation with the outlined human rights mechanisms, there has been no substantive movement on the part of the United States to address the right to self-determination and the colonial status of the Virgin Islands of the United States. In its second-cycle UPR report of February 2015, the United States stated, with respect to racial discrimination in voting, that "[t]he right to vote is fundamental to democracy" and that "ensuring equal access to the ballot box is critical." However, this commitment has not been extended to the nearly 4 million U.S. citizens living in the territories, who remain ineligible to vote in U.S. presidential elections because voting rights are limited to the 50 U.S. States and the District of Columbia under the U.S. **Constitution.**

The United States **submits information to the UN Secretary-General on an annual basis regarding conditions in the territory, in compliance with Article 73(e) of the UN Charter, but withdrew its formal cooperation from the UN Decolonization Committee in 1992. The US presents a statement on decolonization agenda items at the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee),** cooperating with the substantive UN Committee dealing with decolonization issues, is itself a violation of international obligations and reflects the broader pattern of non-engagement with the UN decolonization process documented by Dr. Corbin [11].

D. Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations

1. Equality, Non-Discrimination, and the Denial of Political Rights

Virgin Islanders do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as other Americans living under the United States flag. They are subjected to jurisprudence that infringes on their ability to exercise the most basic rights of citizenship. Virgin Islanders cannot vote for the United States President, while military service sign-up (selective service) is mandatory for males. The Virgin Islands' Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives is a non-voting member, unable to cast votes on House measures or bills.

This arrangement violates the right to be free from racial discrimination, protected under Article 1(3) of the ICCPR and Article 5(c) of ICERD, as well as Article 15 of ICERD with respect to the mandate to report to both the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the General Assembly's Fourth Committee on

Decolonization. The U.S. treatment of Virgin Islanders as second-class citizens violates Article 2 (right to equality before the law) and Article 20 (right to vote and to participate in government) of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.

2. Healthcare Disparities and Federal Inequality

Virgin Islanders, like inhabitants of other United States territories, are subjected to systemic healthcare disparities rooted in their colonial status. Federal Medicaid funding for the Virgin Islands is capped at a fixed match rate significantly lower than the rate the territory would receive if it were a state. Additionally, residents of the Virgin Islands were not afforded the same opportunity as mainland Americans to take full advantage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as the territorial government was forced to choose between establishing a healthcare exchange or receiving an increase in Medicaid funding—a choice that states were not required to make.

These disparities are not administrative oversights; they are the direct consequence of the Insular Cases doctrine, which permits Congress to treat territorial residents differently from state residents without subjecting those distinctions to constitutional scrutiny. The 2024 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights information brief on the USVI documented these ongoing civil rights harms and called for federal legislative action [20].

4. Federal Disaster Aid and the Hurricane Recovery Disparity

The level of public awareness of colonial status was heightened by the inadequate recovery efforts following the catastrophic 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), after granting two sets of disaster recovery funding to the Virgin Islands, withheld a third set of funds—unlike the treatment afforded to affected states—citing alleged issues in Puerto Rico that had no bearing on the Virgin Islands' capacity to manage its own federal grants. Governor Albert Bryan publicly expressed deep disappointment with this decision, vowing to push back against what he characterized as discriminatory federal treatment. This episode crystallized for many Virgin Islanders the concrete, material consequences of their territory's colonial status.

4. Land Rights, Economic Disenfranchisement, and St. John

The intersection of colonialism and environmental justice is acutely felt on the island of St. John, where the Virgin Islands National Park occupies over two-thirds of the landmass. As documented by Hadiya Sewer in her 2018 Brown University dissertation, *Possession: A Phenomenology of American Colonialism in St. John, USVI*, the presence of the federal park has catalyzed skyrocketing real estate values, leading to the economic disenfranchisement and land loss of ancestral Virgin Islands families [32]. Rising property taxes have made it increasingly difficult for native populations to retain their properties, prompting civil rights litigation regarding unfair property tax assessments.

In 2008, the Virgin Islands Unity Day Group, Inc. (VIUDG) filed a lawsuit against the Virgin Islands Government and the Tax Assessor, claiming that the reassessment of real property denied members substantive due process and classified St. John property differently from similar property in St. Croix and St. Thomas without reason or justification [33]. This case illustrates the broader pattern of economic marginalization that accompanies colonial governance.

5. Religious Freedom and the Rastafarian Community

VIYAC reaffirms the concerns of the Virgin Islands Rastafari Sacramental Cannabis Council regarding the persistent racial discrimination and denial of rights to practice religious beliefs faced by the Rastafarian community. The Council invokes protections under the UDHR Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18, 22, 26, and 30; Chapter XI of the UN Charter; ICERD; ICESCR; the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993; and the Religious Liberty Protection Act of 1999. The Council's statement reflects a broader pattern of cultural and religious suppression that is inseparable from the territory's colonial status.

6. Regional Integration and the OECS/CARICOM Barrier

As documented in a 1951 U.S. Government report to the UN Secretary General, the Virgin Islands, **before the advent of elected government**, participated in regional bodies including the Caribbean Commission and the West Indian Conference. **Since the extension of elected government, the Virgin Islands became an associate member of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and its subsidiary body, the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, in 1984. The US, as the administering Power of the Virgin Islands, has not provided the territory with the delegation of authority to seek a formal association with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), or the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), or the Association of Caribbean States (ACS),** despite repeated requests to the United States government [34]. The reasons for denial remain unclear and unexplained and are violative of UN resolutions supporting the Virgin Islands' **membership in regional organizations.**

Dr. Corbin has argued before the UN Special Committee on Decolonization that this exclusion from regional bodies is a direct consequence of dependency governance, which denies territories the political space to access regional and international programs [10]. Dr. Kahina's work with the CARICOM Reparations Commission and the Caribbean Studies Association further demonstrates the organic regional connections that the colonial framework artificially suppresses [27] [28]. The Virgin Islands' exclusion from CARICOM is particularly anomalous given the territory's deep cultural, historical, and geographical ties to the Eastern Caribbean.

D. Updated Recommendations to the United States Government

In alignment with international human rights obligations, the UN Charter, General Assembly Resolution 1541 (XV), the most recent UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/79/112 (2024), and the scholarly frameworks provided by Genevieve Whitaker, J.D., and Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina, VIYAC, submit the following updated recommendations to the United States:

Recommendation 1 — Constitutional Equality and Voting Rights: The United States must initiate a constitutional amendment process to provide full voting rights for persons in the territories, including the right to vote for the President of the United States and to have full voting representation in Congress. **This should be initiated only after formal consultation with the people of the territories themselves on any implications to their right to self-determination and consequent decolonization of the extension of such rights.** Congress should formally repudiate the Insular Cases through legislation, consistent with H.Res.314 (118th Congress, 2023–2024), which calls for the rejection of the Insular Cases and their application to all present and future cases involving the application of the Constitution in the territories.

Recommendation 2 — Healthcare Parity: The United States must immediately end discriminatory healthcare funding practices. The Virgin Islands must be treated equally with the states in the distribution of federal healthcare aid, including the removal of Medicaid funding caps and the extension of full ACA benefits to territorial residents.

Recommendation 3 — Decolonization and Political Status Education: The United States must provide dedicated federal funding and structural support to the Government of the Virgin Islands to implement comprehensive decolonization, political status, and cultural education programs beginning at the elementary school level. These programs should be developed in partnership with institutions such as the Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center and should utilize culturally grounded frameworks such as the Kallaloo Framework developed under the leadership of Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina.

Recommendation 4 — Referendum and Self-Determination Process: The United States must establish a joint task force with the Government of the Virgin Islands to support a binding referendum process on political status. This process must be preceded by an extensive, federally funded public education campaign on the full range of self-determination options as defined by UNGA Resolution 1541 (XV), including independence, free association, and integration. The United States should engage constructively with the Sixth Constitutional Convention process and commit to respecting its outcome.

Recommendation 5 — Regional Integration: The United States Department of State and Department of the Interior must formally establish and actively support a pathway for the Virgin Islands to attain Associate Membership in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), **and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS)** in promotion of the social, economic, and cultural development of the territory and its people.

Recommendation 6 — Land Rights and Restitution: The United States must investigate and address claims of land rights violations in the Virgin Islands, particularly on St. John. The National Park Service must make all land ownership records public and easily accessible. The federal government should provide financial and legal support to Virgin Islanders engaged in ongoing advocacy around ancestral land retention.

Recommendation 7 — Religious Freedom: Congress and federal agencies must take concerted steps to ensure adherence to laws protecting the free exercise of religion for all Virgin Islanders, specifically addressing the documented pattern of discrimination faced by the Rastafarian community.

Recommendation 8 — UN Reporting Obligations: The United States must **carry out** its obligations under Article 73(e) of the UN Charter to transmit regular information to the UN Secretary General on the economic, social, and educational conditions in the Virgin Islands **in a transparent manner**, and must **resume formal cooperation** with the UN Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24) regarding the territory's path to self-determination.

E. Conclusion

The Virgin Islands of the United States stands at a critical juncture. The Sixth Constitutional Convention is drafting a governing document that could represent the most significant assertion of local self-governance in the territory's history. The international community, through the UN General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization, has repeatedly called for progress on the territory's political status. The scholarly community, led by experts such as Dr. Carlyle G. Corbin, Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina, has provided the intellectual architecture for understanding both the depth of the democratic deficit and the path toward its resolution.

Dr. Corbin's work on dependency governance demonstrates that the current federal-territorial relationship does not meet the international standard for a Full Measure of Self-Government, and that the United States' non-engagement with the UN decolonization process is itself a violation of its Charter obligations [11] [12]. Dr. Kahina's work on cultural sovereignty and decolonization education demonstrates that political self-determination cannot be achieved without first restoring the cultural identity and historical consciousness that colonial governance has systematically suppressed [25] [26] [29].

VIYAC calls upon the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Special Committee on Decolonization, and all international governance bodies to hold the United States accountable for its obligations under the UN Charter and international human rights law. The people of the Virgin Islands—predominantly of African descent, historically marginalized, and constitutionally disenfranchised—deserve no less than the full measure of self-determination that international law guarantees to all peoples.

References/End Notes

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This report was prepared by the Virgin Islands Youth Advocacy Coalition, Inc. (VIYAC) headed by President and Co-Founder, Genevieve Whitaker, J.D. with revisions by Dr. Davis Kahina of Per Ankh for submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council and international governance bodies. Updated April 2026. All Rights Reserved© 2026