

# THE VIRGIN ISLANDS CULTURAL EDUCATION NOTEBOOK

VIRGIN ISLANDS PUERTO RICAN  
FRIENDSHIP DAY

EDITION I



# Virgin Islands/Puerto Rican Friendship Day



Over fifty years ago on February 20, 1964 through **Bill #2019 Act #1076**, Virgin Islands – Puerto Rico Friendship Day became law. It recognizes and strengthens the bonds of kinship that exists between the United States Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

The Virgin Islands/Puerto Rico Friendship Committee has been in operation for 56 years.

Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands of the United States are the only two United States territories in the Caribbean Sea.

Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are in close proximity. The US Virgin Islands are 40-50 miles east of Puerto Rico.



**A bill** is proposed legislation under consideration by a legislature. A bill does not become law until it is passed by the legislature and, in most cases, approved by the executive.

**An act** is a statute or law that declares, proscribes, or commands something; a specific law, expressed in writing.

## Equity: Virgin Islands / Puerto Rico

On March 22, 1873, slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico. The **Grito de Lares** **Lares revolution**—was the first major revolt against Spanish rule in Puerto Rico. The revolt was led by Ramon Emeterio Betances.



El Honorable Dr. Betances.

In late June 1867 Betances and 12 more "revolutionaries" were exiled from Puerto Rico. While in exile in St. Thomas, VI, Betances wrote "Los Diez Mandamientos de los hombres libres," (The Ten Commandments of Free Men) in November 1867.



Slavery ended in the Danish West Indies now the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1848 followed by the labor strike of 1878 called **Contract Day or Fireburn.**



## VI/PR U.S Citizenship

Both Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands of the United States were ruled under **Naval law** before receiving unincorporated territory status'.



**Puerto Rico:** After the ratification of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, Puerto Rico came under the military control of the United States. The Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898. The formal transfer of Puerto Rico to the United States took two months.

**Virgin Islands:** After the United States bought what is now known as the United States Virgin Islands from the Danish, the islands officially became an unincorporated U.S. territory in 1927.



1917  
 Jones Act  
 The act made Puerto Rico an "organized but unincorporated" United States territory. Puerto Ricans were given a restricted U.S. citizenship.

1917  
 Formal transfer of the Virgin Islands occurred on March 31, 1917, along with a U.S. payment to Denmark of \$25,000,000 in gold coin.



## Migration of Puerto Ricans to the Virgin Islands and to American cities.

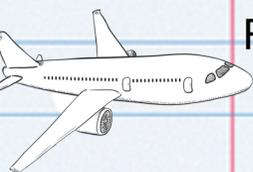
From the 1940s until 2003, the US Navy used Vieques as a training ground for war, The eastern end of the island was used for live training exercises and bombing exercises.

The transformation of Puerto Rico's economy under the export promotion program known as "**Operation Bootstrap**" caused a shift of employment from agriculture to manufacturing and a shift of the rural population to the towns and cities of Puerto Rico. Researchers state that the initiatives propelled a large exodus of Puerto Ricans after 1945.



Puerto Rican woman washing clothes in "villages" near Frederiksted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. 1941.

Research also indicates that after years of immigration by boat, the Puerto Rican migration became the first great airborne migration in U.S. history due to the rise of affordable airline tickets.

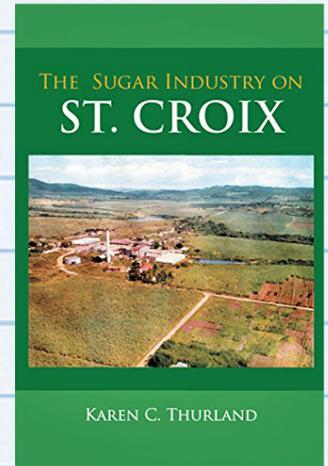




## Migration of Puerto Ricans to the Virgin Islands continued..

Operation Bootstrap propelled the industrialization of Puerto Rico. Critics state that many of the initiatives led Puerto to be dependent on foreign investors. Meanwhile on St. Croix, the Virgin Islands Company operating at Estate Bethlehem began to employ workers in the newly re-invigorated sugar cane industry.

“The Sugar Industry on St. Croix,” written by Karen Thurland states that some Puerto Ricans from the island of Vieques and Culebra were brought to St. Croix to cut sugar cane after the collapse of the sugar industry on both islands.



## The New Deal

The New Deal was a series of programs, public work projects, financial reforms, and regulations enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States between 1933 and 1939. The programs responded to needs for relief, reform, and recovery from the Great Depression.

The Virgin Islands was awarded funding by homestead housing programs to improve housing conditions in the territory. The program included housing on farm land in the vicinity of Frederiksted on St. Croix.



PUERTO RICAN  
HOMESTEAD FARMERS

"Frederiksted, Saint Croix, Virgin Islands (vicinity). Puerto Rican family living in one of the villages reconditioned by the Virgin Islands Company. The Puerto Rican population in the islands has increased in the last decade."

Frederiksted (vicinity), Saint Croix Island, Virgin Islands. Puerto Rican farmer grinding corn with stones he brought with him from Puerto Rico. Library of Congress. 1941





## Bomba and Bamboula Dance Traditions

Both dance genres originated in Africa. Enslaved Africans and their descendants have practiced the two very similar dance styles. The early origins of Bomba in Puerto Rico began with Black laborers, slaves, and free persons who worked on plantations. Similarly, the Bamboula dance was performed by enslaved people on plantations as a ceremonial dance for fertility, courtship, and rebellion. Local historians state that at the beginning of the 1878 labor riots on St. Croix, as well as the 1892 coal strike on St. Thomas, the Bamboula ceremonial dance was performed by laborers before they took action.

### **Video Resources:**

Dr. Chenzira Davis Kahina R. M., Ph.D., Director of Virgin Islands and Caribbean Cultural Center  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3d1uRaZrFs>

Puerto Rico's Bomba, A Dance of The African Diaspora | KQED Arts  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0vzkGKEWX4>