GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Premier's Message for Heroes and Foreparents Day

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Message by Dr. the Hon. Natalio D. Wheatley

Premier of the Virgin Islands

Heroes and Foreparents Day

20 October, 2025

People of the Virgin Islands,

Today, we pause to honour the strength, courage, and vision of those whose shoulders we stand upon, our heroes and foreparents. Heroes and Foreparents Day is not simply a holiday; it is a sacred moment of remembrance and gratitude.

It is a day to reflect on the sacrifices and struggles of those who paved the way for the freedoms, opportunities, and progress we now enjoy. They endured hardship and uncertainty, yet they stood firm in faith, in love of country, and in the belief that a brighter future was possible for generations to come.

We remember and celebrate the names that echo through our history—those who have been officially conferred with the title of national hero for the first time in our history: Shelly Martin, Augustus McCleverty, Pereen Georges, Henry Garnett, Obadiah Dawson, Theodolph Faulkner, Carlton DeCastro, Isaac Fonseca, Noel Lloyd, Lavity Stoutt. Their courage ignited a spirit of self-determination that still burns in our hearts today.

We also pay tribute to countless unsung heroes: mothers, fathers, educators, farmers, fishermen, community builders, all who worked tirelessly to shape the Virgin Islands into the strong, proud territory we call home.

This year, Heroes and Foreparents Day coincides with the first observance of Diplomatic Week in the Virgin Islands. This provides an ideal opportunity for us to reflect on the remarkable journey of the Virgin Islands and the role international relations and diplomacy have played in shaping our destiny. Indeed, the work of past and current BVI diplomats and foreign service staff have situated our young nation within the global community, and these achievements have been critically interconnected with our development and progress.

The growth and political advancement of the Virgin Islands have never occurred in isolation. From the earliest days, our foreparents and heroes recognized the power of building bridges across borders. Through their tireless efforts, the BVI has established and maintained strong diplomatic ties that have opened doors for economic development, cultural exchange, and mutual support. Our past and present diplomats, diplomatic staff and officers in other overseas posts have been steadfast advocates for our interests, ensuring the voice of the Virgin Islands is heard on the world stage.

Among the heroes whose contributions to national development we recognize this year is the Honourable Lorna Smith OBE, Territorial At Large Member of the Virgin Islands House of Assembly and Minister for Financial Services and Economic Development. Honourable Smith has been one of our pioneers in international relations and diplomacy, having played crucial roles in setting up and running the BVI's London and Hong Kong Offices, and promoting the BVI's Financial Services in major markets as head of the BVI International Finance Centre.

Over the years, we have witnessed significant strides in international relations. The BVI's active participation in regional organizations such as CARICOM and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, engagement with global partners, and representation in international forums like the United Nations have strengthened our standing and brought tangible benefits to our people. Whether negotiating trade agreements, advocating for climate resilience, or seeking support in times of crisis, our diplomats have worked tirelessly to secure opportunities and safeguard our future. We will be recognizing the work of some of these persons as well.

Our diplomats have been a bridge to the international community in our moments of need. After hurricanes, during global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and in staving off the recent threat to suspend our constitution, we have seen firsthand how vital these diplomatic connections are. They remind us that we are not alone on our journey. In our darkest hours, friends, near and far, have helped us rebuild, recover and to stand with courage - testaments to the enduring relationships nurtured by our heroes in diplomacy.

As we honor the legacy of those who came before us, let us also recognize the torchbearers of today and tomorrow. The continued advancement of the BVI depends on our ability to engage, collaborate, and advocate on the international stage.

As we observe this year's Heroes and Foreparents day, let us remain inspired by the vision and courage of our foreparents and heroes; let us continue to stand firm for the good of our beloved Virgin Islands; let us honour the past by building a future rooted in national pride, unity, integrity, and hope.

May we always remember the purpose of this celebration: to give thanks, to reflect, and to recommit ourselves to the values that define us.

May we continue to thank Almighty Father for His blessings upon our people and this beautiful territory.

May we never forget where we came from.

And may we, together, carry the torch forward with pride and purpose.

God bless our people and these beautiful Virgin Islands!

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Additional Documents or Media

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