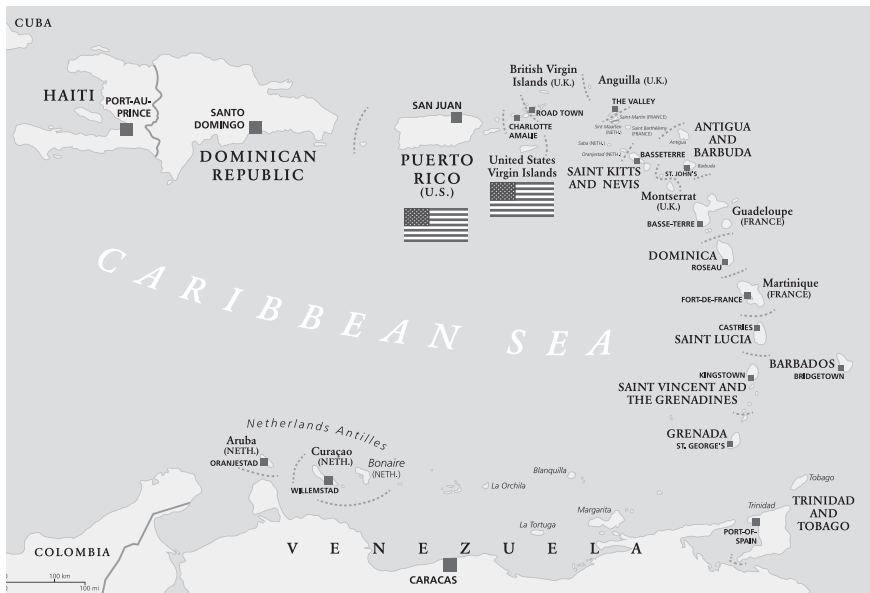


Race Relations in the U.S. Virgin Islands



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Race Relations in the U.S. Virgin Islands

St. Thomas—A Centennial Retrospective

Marilyn F. Krigger



CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Krigger, Marilyn F., author.

Title: Race relations in the US Virgin Islands : St. Thomas, a centennial retrospective / Marilyn F. Krigger.

Other titles: St. Thomas, a centennial retrospective

Description: Durham, N.C. : Carolina Academic Press, LLC, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017012106 | ISBN 9781531002411 (alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Saint Thomas (United States Virgin Islands : Island)--Race relations. | United States Virgin Islands--Race relations.

Classification: LCC F2105 .K78 2017 | DDC 305.80097297/22--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017012106>

eISBN 978-1-53100-458-3

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS, LLC
700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

In Loving Memory

of

*My Mother,
also a history teacher,
Mary Skelton Francis
(1917–2007),*

*My Husband,
Rudolph E. Krigger
(1934–2010),*

and

*three special CVI/UVI alumni,
Raymond Joseph
Dana Orie
Valentine Penha,*

*whose very impressive but shortened lives
did not allow their completion of all that
many had expected, but we remain thankful!*

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Preface

Many United States Virgin Islanders have been looking forward to the local unfolding of events in the year 2017, which marks the Transfer Centennial—the 100th anniversary of our beloved islands being transferred from the sovereignty of Denmark to that of the United States of America. Some events have already taken place, such as a spectacular Transfer Day Program on March 31st which featured, in addition to local dignitaries and performers and many visiting Danes, the Prime Minister of Denmark and the U.S. Secretary of Interior, who read a letter from President Trump. There are remaining expectations of continuing programs and forums, cultural exhibitions, colorful carnival parades, and picnics and social gatherings featuring great dining, story-telling, and grateful expressions of thanks to those, whether still living or not, whose labor and efforts have contributed positively to what we love and value about the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This book is a personal attempt by one Virgin Islander to contribute to the Centennial commemoration intellectually. It attempts to trace the relationships between the major racial groups—Whites and Blacks—and any involved others, that have shared St. Thomas since its colonization by Europeans in the late 1600s. It is hoped that it will motivate Virgin Islands residents, our fellow Americans, our fellow Caribbean peoples, and all interested others to consider more seriously, through the prism of race relations in one small society, how members and groups in societies have thought of, lived with, and treated each other, and to ponder how greater understanding, respect, and morality in human relations may be promoted.

The book stems from a doctoral dissertation on race relations in St. Thomas that was done in the early 1980s at the University of Delaware. My thanks to UD and my mentors there; to the University—then College—of the Virgin Islands, from which I was on sabbatical leave; and to the Virgin Islands Aca-

ademic and Cultural Awards Endowment for the assistance it provided. The original dissertation has been revised and updated by recent research. In addition to the published works of Virgin Islands' and other scholars, major sources have been Virgin Islands newspapers, governmental reports, and interviews and conversations with many Virgin Islands residents, some of whom preferred anonymity, while most were willing to allow their names to be mentioned. The listed names are at the end of the bibliography, just before the index. Some have since departed, adding special poignancy to the study. I am deeply indebted to them all.

In keeping with the social reality of the Americanization of many aspects of Virgin Islands culture, the definitions of "black" and "white" used in this monograph are mainly those of the U.S. mainland, which are now in common use in the Virgin Islands. Thus, persons with any known African ancestry are referred to as black, even though that was not always the historical practice in the Virgin Islands. Black and white are not capitalized when used as adjectives (the black workers), but are when used as nouns (Blacks tend to be less wealthy than Whites).

I thank especially Dr. William Boyer, of the University of Delaware, for his publications during the last few decades on Virgin Islands history and political development. He has been not only a great professional model, but also a great friend. Other history professionals, whose works have added substantially to the recent written history of the U.S. Virgin Islands, include the late Dr. Neville Hall of the University of the West Indies-Jamaica; along with the late Dr. Isaac Dookhan and also Dr. Arnold Highfield, who were both my long-term colleagues at the University of the Virgin Islands.

Special thanks for assistance in procuring information to University of the Virgin Islands professionals and staff at its Paiewonsky and St. Croix libraries, the Eastern Caribbean Center, and the Offices of the President and Provost. Similar professional treatment was received at the Bureau of Economic Research of the Virgin Islands Government. The many weeks spent at the new Charles W. Turnbull Regional Library in eastern St. Thomas put it in a class by itself, and truly special thanks are due to Susan Lugo, the Territorial Archivist, and Beverly Smith, its Virgin Islands Collection Curator.

One's family usually plays substantial roles during research and writing efforts. I thank my son, Rudy Krigger, Jr. for his keen observations and his special assistance in numerous ways. I am also greatly indebted to my former student and now adopted daughter, Letetia Penn Rodgers, without whose persistence and computer skills, this work would not have been completed. My cousin, Ruth E. Thomas, a natural educator and the former principal of the

Charlotte Amalie High School, has been, as usual, an abundant source of general knowledge and wisdom. Additionally, to my many friends, former colleagues, and students who have been great sources of inspiration and knowledge over the years, special gratitude is extended. However, any faults and shortcomings of the work are mine, not theirs.

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April, 2017