



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Public Relations

1834 Kongens Gade, Charlotte Amalie * St. Thomas * U.S. Virgin Islands 00802-6746
Telephone: 340.774.0100 Ext. 8136 (STT/STJ) 340.773.1095 Ext. 7064 (STX)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 17, 2025

0110-25

For More Information Contact:

Shayla S. Solomon
Director, Public Relations & Communications
shayla.solomon@vide.vi
www.vide.vi ~ www.facebook.com/usvi.vide

VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION OF VIRGIN ISLANDS CULTURAL EDUCATION LAUNCHES COLLABORATION WITH AMERICAN ANCESTORS

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education is proud to announce the launch of an exciting collaboration with American Ancestors – A National Center for Family History, Heritage & Culture. The launch will take place on Wednesday, January 22, 2025. This initiative, supported by the Youth Genealogy Curriculum Coordinator at The Brue Family Learning Center, gives all schools in our territory free access to the American Ancestors platform. The platform is a tool that brings history, heritage, and identity to life through genealogy research.

As the VIDE prepares to honor Black History Month in February and Virgin Islands History Month in March, this partnership offers an opportunity for teachers to guide students on a journey of self-discovery and cultural pride. Through this platform, educators can access a curriculum that helps youth trace their family stories and understand their heritage, dive into historical records like census documents, immigration files, and vital records, and use interactive tools and multimedia to make history engaging and personal.

Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Started:

1. Connect to Your School Network.
 - To access the platform, make sure you are connected to your school's secure internet. Access is tied to each school's network.
2. Visit the American Ancestors Website.
 - Open your browser and go to www.americanancestors.org.
3. Automatic Login.
 - The system will recognize your school's network and grant access automatically. You'll see a banner confirming your access.
4. Create a Personal Account (Optional, but Highly Recommended)
 - Click Sign Up or Register.
 - Use your school email to create an account. This allows you to save searches, bookmark resources, and customize your experience.

5. Explore Resources

- Check out the Learning Center for guides, tutorials, and lesson plans.
- Dive into the Youth Genealogy Curriculum to find engaging activities for students.

6. Troubleshooting

- If you experience any issues, confirm your connection to the school network.
- Reach out to your IT team or contact the Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education for support.

This year, the National Black History Month theme, "African Americans and Labor," underscores the immense contributions of Black individuals to the labor movement and the progress of society. Nationally, the spotlight shines on Ashley L. Totten, a pioneering labor leader whose work with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters paved the way for the first African American labor union to receive a charter from the American Federation of Labor. It is vital to highlight that Totten was born on St. Croix, making him not only a national figure but a proud son of the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Our students should take this opportunity to research Totten's legacy and explore the broader history of labor movements in the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean. By engaging with the stories of laborers and their significant contributions, they can gain a deeper appreciation of the resilience and unity that have shaped our collective identity. This exploration connects their heritage to a larger narrative, empowering them to understand the vital role of labor in shaping both the Virgin Islands and the wider world.

For more information or support, please contact the Director of the Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education, Stephanie C. Brown via email at stephanie.cbrown@vide.vi or at 340-773-1095 ext. 7032. Together, we're shaping a future rooted in pride, understanding, and unity.

###