Dear President Hall,

I am writing to you in response to your inquiry about a comment I made last April that was recently reported in several media outlets here in St. Thomas. During the course of this meeting I was asked why I would leave the Virgin Islands. I replied that there were certainly many reasons to stay, yet there were also challenges, many of which appeared to be the result of the territory being similar to a "two-and-a-half-world country" and which frequently played a major role in inhibiting change. In no way did I intend to insult anyone or anything about the Virgin Islands, a place and people that I have grown to respect and admire. If this comment is being taken by anyone as an insult, I apologize for that.

However, I believe it is important to understand the context and background of my remarks. As a Sociologist I have studied social inequality for over three decades, my entire career. During the course of that study one of the scholars whose work I learned from was the Trinidadian born Sociologist Oliver Cox. Dr. Cox, in his now highly regarded work, Race, Caste, and Class, laid out the beginning of what has since developed into a major framework for understanding the underpinnings of the system of inequality that exists at the level of nation states as well as the individual in contemporary capitalism.

Dr. Cox's analysis, as well as subsequent research and theoretical work, provided an understanding of the history of oppression and exploitation (perhaps even super-exploitation) and how that history plays itself out in the modern world, resulting in a system of inequality that continues to be pervasive today. Specifically, three tiers exist in the organization of the political economy of the nation state system of the world capitalist economy. Those states that are at the top of this system are frequently referred to as the Core states (the manufacturing economies with high paid jobs and the highest quality of life in the world system). At the bottom of this structure is the Periphery; these are states that have an economy largely dependent on the work of extracting raw materials and shipping them to those states in the middle tier, the Semi-Periphery, where they are processed and sent on to the Core state for final manufacturing and/or consumption. These three tiers are frequently referred to in more common vernacular as First, Second, and Third World states or economies. Each state in a higher position in this three tiered system is in a position of power (military and/or economic power) that allows it to continue to exploit and oppress the members of the states in these lower tiers. This continued oppression and exploitation interferes with what some would believe is a natural process of development, often contributing to what has been referred to as 'the development of underdevelopment'.

I believe the evidence shows that the Virgin Islands and its people have been subjected to exactly these forces and this underdevelopment. Clearly, in the colonial period in which slavery and a plantation economy were in place here on the islands, the system was one of extraction of raw material in agriculture; specifically cane sugar. Since that time some progress has taken place, however, high rates of poverty and dependency on external sources of funding, together with the historical processes and
realities that have affected the Virgin Islands and its citizens, have acted to thwart economic development and change in the region. This continues to be a challenge.

I further believe the people of this territory deserve better; they should have equitable access to resources that would create the kinds of educational and economic opportunities that are available to all U.S. citizens. It is for this reason that I continue to work in the area of education as I believe it is a cornerstone for the progress that can and must continue in the United States Virgin Islands. Rather than attacking the Virgin Islands or its citizens, I believe I used the term in an accurate assessment of the challenges faced here. Again, if anyone has taken offense or been insulted with this characterization, I am truly sorry; that was certainly not my intention.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

George Lord, PhD

ps: The above statement should only be presented in its entirety or not at all.