

Do you really want to know how to engage Virgin Islanders to actively participate in democracy and get involved with elections? You don't really need to overthink it, you probably get information from it every day, yep you guessed it! Social media and most importantly memes. Governor Albert Bryan's "sluxing" comment went viral within hours, and before the end of the week, there was an entire song. A year later on Thanksgiving Day the governor joked on Facebook saying, "By the power of my office I now declare "let the Sluxing begin!" As funny as this was, it shows the power of social media and its reach in our community and worldwide. If we really want to raise the level of civic engagement of my peers and get them to register to vote, we first need to get them interested in the issues that affect these islands so that they want to go out and vote.

Memes or short videos posted on TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and/or Twitter accounts made specifically for political purposes can greatly encourage others to go out and vote. Statistics¹ suggest memes for marketing is the new future, with data showing evidence of up to 60% of people saying they would be more likely to buy from a company that uses memes in their marketing. If Virgin Islanders can capitalize on this fact, then creating memes that encourage voter turnout and registration in an indirect way, the youth will definitely see voting from a new point of view. Memes are not only persuasive but reach a much wider audience, with the same study suggesting memes have about ten times more reach than regular advertisements and 75% of people 13 to 36 years old share memes, the demographic most likely to neglect their voting duties. If Virgin Islanders can hop on this trend, they can not only have fun creating the memes but also work towards a good cause. One idea to encourage younger Virgin Islanders to create these accounts is to add incentives, such as

¹ Meme statistics found on <https://www.amraandelma.com/meme-statistics/>

community service hours or (when the account has hit mainstream) receiving private advertisements from candidates.

Social media is also a powerful tool that my peers and I can use to reach others and encourage them to get involved in the political process. One such way is by sharing news about elections and voter registration drives and engaging in discussions about important political issues, we all can help to raise awareness about the importance of civic engagement. The youth can post updates on fundraisers, who they think will win, who they think should be kicked out of office, and much more. Social media also provides a platform to connect with others and share their thoughts and opinions about the political process.

Virgin Islanders can work with non-profits, religious groups, and schools to educate others about the importance of participating in the political process. These partnerships can help to reach a wider audience and provide additional resources for promoting civic engagement. By collaborating with these organizations, Virgin Islanders can help to build a more engaged and informed community.

Organizing events or initiatives aimed at increasing voter registration and participation is another effective way for my peers and me to encourage eligible voters to cast their ballots. One such example is hosting voter registration drives. These events can be held at community centers, schools, or public spaces and offer individuals the opportunity to register to vote on-site. This not only makes the process of registering more accessible but also helps to raise awareness about the importance of civic engagement.

Finally, and probably the easiest, we can bring the conversation to our households. An elder or an overworked cousin may not be able to have the proper resources or time to do adequate research. After informing yourself with correct information, you can give an unbiased view to others, and encourage them to partake in voting. This not only promotes

civic engagement but also helps to educate eligible voters about the candidates and their positions on important issues.

In conclusion, by taking these actions, my peers and I can play a critical role in promoting civic engagement and increasing voter participation in the Virgin Islands. These actions help to promote the goals of the Elections System of the Virgin Islands, which is to ensure that all eligible citizens can participate in the democratic process. Now, it's time to go out there and do your part!