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Virgin Islander Sanaa Burke Shines on Fox Weather, Pursues Career in Meteorology and Climate Science

Sanaa Burke plans to leverage this opportunity to advocate for the USVI and inspire local youth to pursue careers in meteorology

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Sanaa Burke, a meteorology and climate science student at the University of Delaware.

A young Virgin Islander is making waves on national television, and is using the attention to propel her career studying waves — tropical ones, that is — as well as depressions, storms and hurricanes.?

This week, Sanaa Burke has appeared on Fox Weather three times in as many days to provide updates on storm damage across the territory. Currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in meteorology and climate science with a minor in geography at the University of Delaware, Ms.

Burke has described the experience as “absolutely wonderful.”

Born and raised in Christiansted, St. Croix, Sanaa spent her formative years with her head in the clouds — almost literally. “We had this segment in our science books that spoke about the different types of clouds. I would take that book outside every day and I would identify each cloud one by one,” she said gleefully, citing the experience as the one where her love for meteorology began. “Fox Weather, specifically, has reignited that spark I’ve had for meteorology, and there’s no going back for me.”

In the direct path of Tropical Storm Ernesto while at home in St. Croix, Ms. Burke shared weather updates with her colleagues at the University of Delaware via an online group chat. It was one of the university’s alumni who offered her the Fox Weather opportunity after receiving her updates. Initially hesitant, she quickly reconsidered. “When doors are open for you, you do not close them on yourself.”

“They’re inviting me to come to the studio whenever I’m up in New York... I am just so overwhelmed. I’m grateful. I am thankful. I don’t have words. It’s beyond my capabilities to explain,” an excited Sanaa Burke told the Consortium. The meteorology student has already begun making arrangements to take full advantage of the opportunity.

In the meantime, Ms. Burke continues to keep Virgin Islanders informed of weather developments in the territory. It’s a selfless task that she says continues to be well received. “I’ve gotten so much love and feedback from the community... It has just been so overwhelming, but in a positive way,” she admitted. “I stayed awake until 2 am for the National Hurricane Center release so that I could update everyone through Facebook. People were so grateful.”

Accurate weather forecasts can help save lives, particularly in Caribbean communities where ever-stronger storms continue to wreak havoc on fragile economies. It’s a reality that is fueling Ms. Burke’s passion. “I think my calling is to be a spokesperson for the United States Virgin Islands. I think my job is to advocate for us. I know that we are constantly overlooked in the field of meteorology,” she said. “It is so important that we stay on top of things, that we update each other about new developments when it comes to weather systems.”

Sanaa is well aware that her chosen career field is not popular in the USVI or the region. “Every time I tell people what my major is, they look at me like I’m crazy...but trust and believe it is possible. Meteorologists in the Caribbean are needed.” In a word of advice to her peers, she noted that “it is so important that our local young Virgin Islanders start taking over the fields that we usually have to hire people on the outside for.”