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Virgin Islands Leaders Mourn the Passing of Tourism Pioneer Leona Bryant

Virgin Islands leaders honor Leona Bryant, the first Virgin Islander to serve as director of Tourism, praising her trailblazing contributions to the industry, dedication to culture, and lasting impact as a beloved ambassador of the USVI

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Leona Bryant, a USVI tourism pioneer. By. RONALD R. WALKER VIA OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The Virgin Islands community is in mourning following the passing of Leona Bryant, a trailblazer in the territory's tourism industry and a cherished cultural ambassador. On Monday, Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach issued heartfelt statements honoring

Ms. Bryant's remarkable contributions to the Virgin Islands.

Mr. Bryan described Ms. Bryant as "one of the Virgin Islands' brightest lights," highlighting her groundbreaking work as the first Virgin Islander, woman, and Black person to serve as Director of the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism. "She didn't just promote the Virgin Islands; she made the world fall in love with our home," he stated, recalling her efforts to showcase the territory's culture on the global stage, from collaborating with Vogue International to championing local steel bands after Hurricane Hugo.

The governor also reflected on Ms. Bryant's beginnings on Garden Street in St. Thomas, where her hospitality set the foundation for a career that spanned decades. Whether captivating audiences on her radio talk show, "Leona," or elevating the Virgin Islands' profile internationally, Ms. Bryant embodied the very best of the community's spirit.

"Her impact on tourism was groundbreaking," Governor Bryan emphasized, adding that Ms. Bryant's legacy serves as a reminder of the importance of love, compassion, and humanity. He extended condolences to her family, including her grandson, Commissioner of Tourism Joseph Boschulte.

Mr. Roach joined in mourning Ms. Bryant, describing her as an iconic figure known for her style, grace, and dedication to the Virgin Islands. He noted her leadership as Director of Tourism from 1981 to 1996, during which she consistently highlighted the unique culture, traditions, and hospitality of the territory in global marketing campaigns.

"Her work showed the deep respect multiple governors had for her ability to lead and develop the territory's tourism product," Mr. Roach stated. He also reflected on her role as host of the "Leona" talk show on WVWI radio, where she continued to engage the community and serve as an ambassador for the Virgin Islands even after her retirement.

The lieutenant governor extended his sympathies to her daughter, Laura Moolenaar, her grandson Commissioner Boschulte, and her other family members, acknowledging her significant contributions to the Virgin Islands and the tourism industry.

A legacy of inspiration

Ms. Bryant's legacy extends far beyond her professional achievements. Both Governor Bryan and Lieutenant Governor Roach emphasized her lasting impact on the Virgin Islands community, inspiring future generations to dream big and work tirelessly for the betterment of the territory.

"May she now rest in peace and glory," said Lieutenant Governor Roach. Governor Bryan added, "Leona Bryant's legacy will continue to inspire us to be better, to dream bigger, and to love our islands as fiercely as she did."