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5th Annual David Hamilton Jackson and All Ah We Student Exhibit Calls Students to ‘Art for Activism’

The Department of Education’s Cultural Division invites K–12 students to submit creative and academic works exploring press freedom, labor rights, and civic equity, honoring the legacies of David Hamilton Jackson and Rothschild Francis.

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Rothchild Francis's statue in Charlotte which Amalie bears the inscriptions, “Persecuted (martyr) Banished Territorial Medal of Honor”. By. FLICKR

The V.I. Department of Education’s Division of Virgin Islands Cultural Education has announced details for the 5th Annual David Hamilton Jackson and All Ah We Student Exhibit, set to open on November 1, 2025 (Liberty Day), at the Cane Roots Art Gallery on Company Street in downtown

Christiansted. The exhibit will run through November 15, celebrating the creative and civic engagement of students across the territory while honoring two of the Virgin Islands' most influential figures — David Hamilton Jackson and Rothschild Francis.

This year's theme, "Art for Activism," calls on students to connect the historic fight for press freedom, labor rights, and civic equity with their own expressions of creativity and citizenship. The initiative underscores the enduring legacy of David Hamilton Jackson, publisher of *The Herald*, and Rothschild Francis, publisher of *The Emancipator*, both of whom were pivotal in advancing justice and equality in the Virgin Islands.

Organizers confirmed that all student and educator prizes are fully funded thanks to generous community donations, notably from Ernice Gilbert, founder and publisher of the Virgin Islands Consortium. The exhibit continues to grow as a vital platform for student expression, civic learning, and cultural pride.

"This project is a vital call to 'Art for Activism,' encouraging students to connect the historical fight for press freedom and equity in the Virgin Islands of the United States," organizers stated.

The event is open to students in grades K–12, who are invited to submit original works across four artistic and academic categories: Visual Arts, Literary Arts, Performing Arts, and Academic Projects. Each category recognizes the top three submissions, with identical prize structures:

- 1st Place: \$300
- 2nd Place: \$175
- 3rd Place: \$112.50

The submission deadline for all entries is October 24, 2025, and schools are responsible for forwarding completed submissions to the project coordinators.

Four Categories of Creative and Academic Expression

The Visual Arts category welcomes drawings, paintings, collages, photography, digital pieces, and mixed media artworks that reflect themes of justice and empowerment.

The Literary Arts division invites essays, poems, analytical papers, short stories, and monologues exploring the Virgin Islands' history, democracy, and civic identity.

Students entering the Performing Arts category may submit original musical compositions, spoken word performances, dramatic skits, or short plays — often through video submissions.

Meanwhile, Academic Projects may include research presentations, historical timelines, social studies reflections, or cross-disciplinary STEAM explorations focused on press freedom, civic leadership, or the historical contributions of Jackson and Francis.

All entries must demonstrate connections between Virgin Islands history, identity, and creative storytelling, while also integrating subjects such as math, language arts, and social studies.

Educator Appreciation Awards

In recognition of the dedication of teachers guiding students through complex civic and historical themes, the exhibit will feature a special Educator Appreciation component.

The Early Learner Guiding Hand Awards honor teachers of Elementary and Lower Primary classes for inspiring participation and helping young students connect to the exhibit's themes of fairness and justice.

- 1st Place: \$75 Gift Card — awarded to the teacher with the most impactful class participation and theme connection.
- 2nd Place: \$50 Gift Card — awarded for strong participation and student guidance reflecting the principles of justice.
- Class Participation Draw: \$25 Gift Card — awarded through a random drawing among all participating teachers (K–12).

These awards highlight the crucial role educators play in fostering civic awareness and creativity among the territory's youngest learners.

Resources and Curriculum Support

The exhibit's educational component is grounded in a structured curriculum, with module resources, student readings, biographies, and discussion questions available in the official 2025 David Hamilton Jackson and All Ah We Student Exhibit Overview. These materials are designed to help students explore the lives and legacies of Jackson and Francis while connecting their struggles to modern concepts of democracy, social justice, and freedom of expression.

Event Details and Community Impact

The 5th Annual David Hamilton Jackson and All Ah We Student Exhibit will take place at the Cane Roots Art Gallery from November 1–15, 2025. The opening coincides with Liberty Day, a public holiday honoring David Hamilton Jackson's fight for press freedom and labor rights.

Submissions must be completed and submitted to school coordinators by October 24, 2025. The event continues to serve as both a cultural celebration and an educational bridge, linking past and present struggles for justice while empowering the next generation to lead with creativity and conviction.