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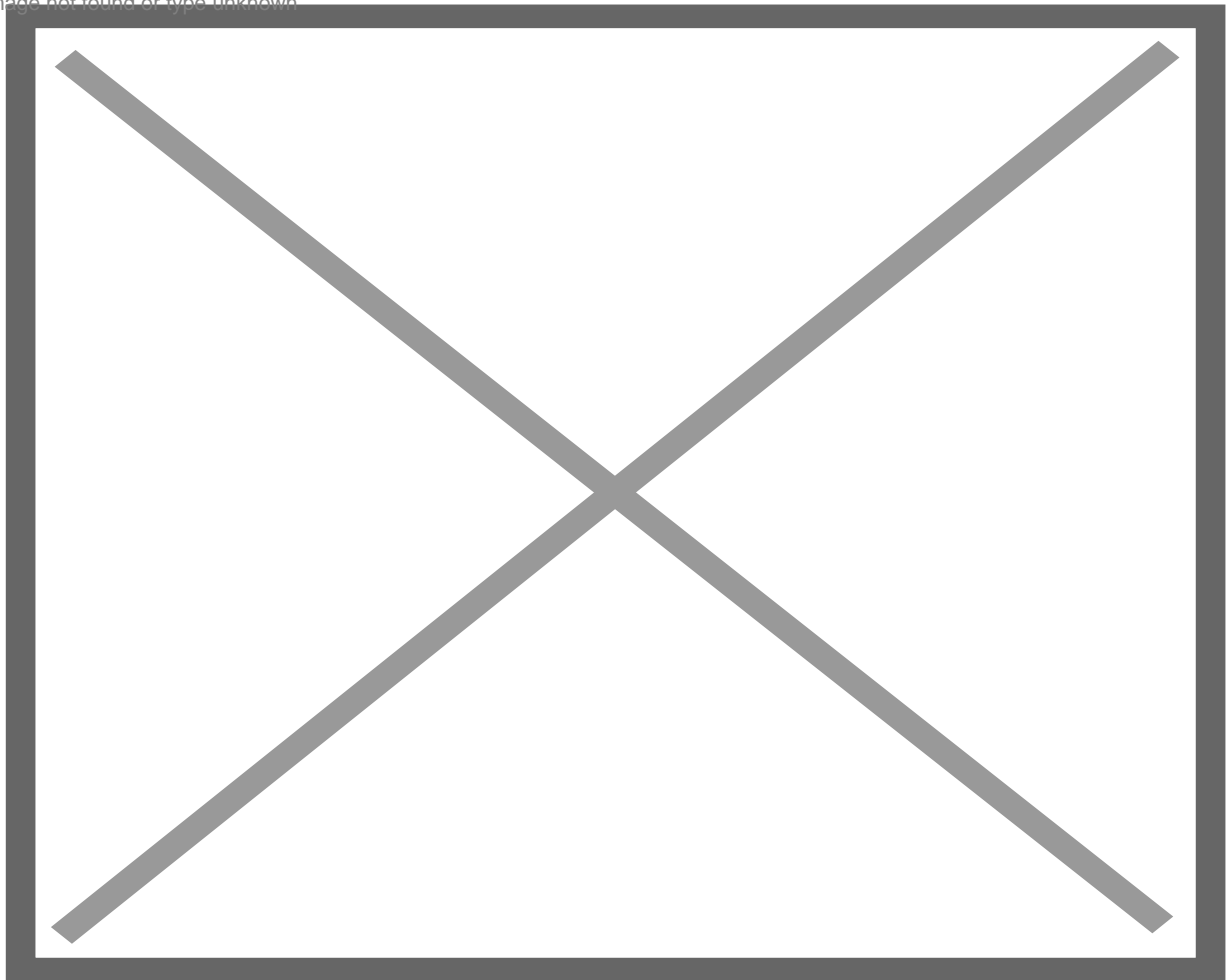
Amenti Philip Crowned Miss St. Croix 2025–2026 After Head-to-Head Pageant Showdown

Baker and cultural ambassador Amenti Philip secured the Miss St. Croix crown following a two-woman competition, prevailing over aviation student Rayniyah Ilaraza after strong performances in interview, cultural wear, and evening gown.

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Miss St. Croix 2025–2026 Amenti Philip. By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS| V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Amenti Philip was crowned Miss St. Croix 2025–2026 on Sunday night after earning the highest overall score in a focused two-contestant competition that tested intellect, cultural awareness, and stage presence. Rayniyah Ilaraza delivered a strong and thoughtful performance throughout the evening, as the Crucian Christmas Festival's weekend of pageantry came to a close.

The final pageant featured Ms. Philip and Ms. Ilaraza, both 20 years old, competing across multiple segments designed to highlight leadership, cultural insight, and presentation. Ms. Ilaraza is an aviation management senior at Elizabeth City State University who aspires to become a commercial pilot, while Ms. Philip is continuing her family's long-standing baking legacy into a new generation.

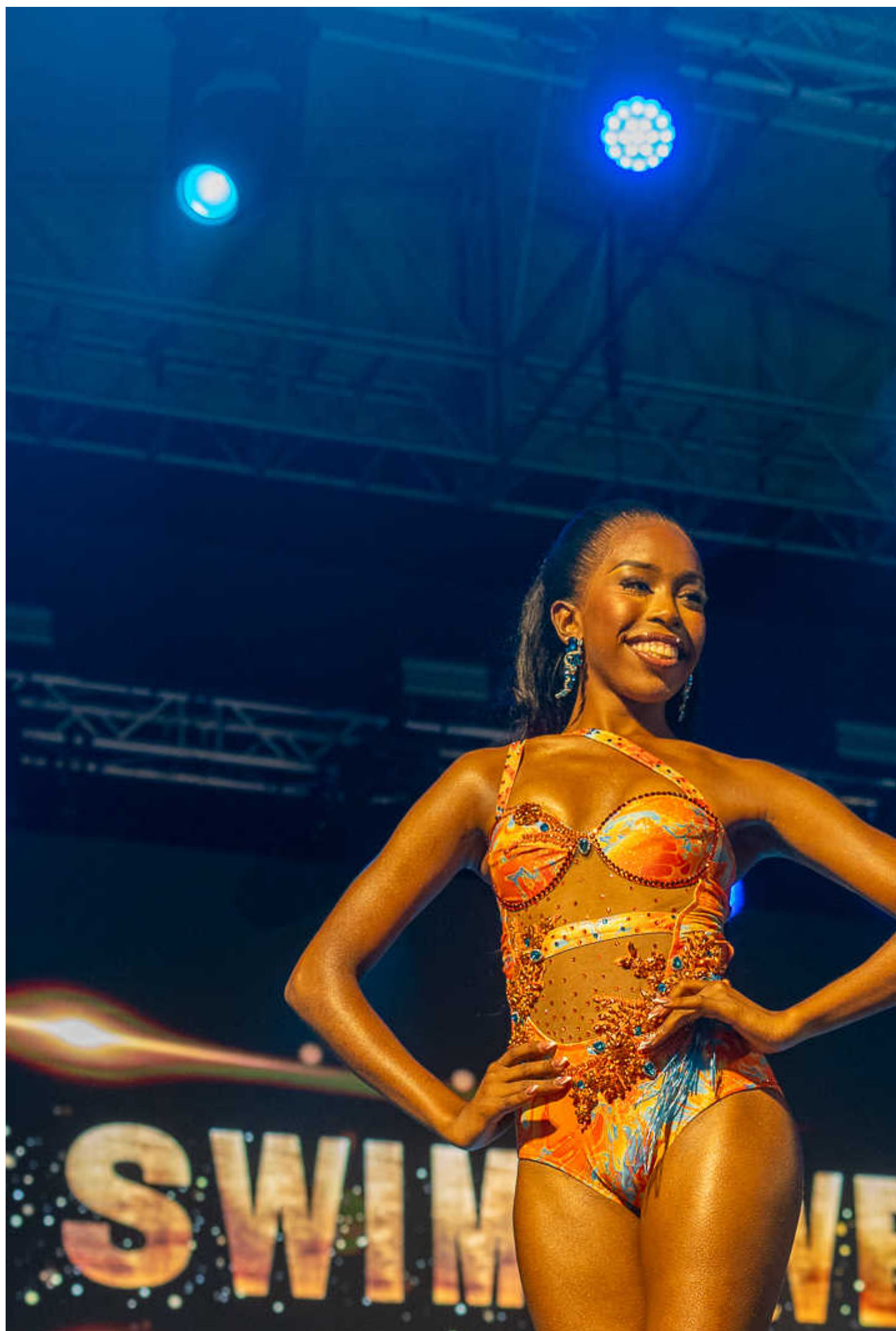
The competition opened with the question-and-answer segment, where each contestant responded to three questions, two of which were scored by the judges. Asked how she would use the Miss St. Croix title to strengthen cultural pride among young people, Ms. Ilaraza said her focus would be on "instilling cultural programs into our education system." Her second judged question addressed long-term economic priorities, and she pointed to the importance of investing in opportunities that keep young people rooted in the territory. "Creating more internships and mentorship programs for our youth in the community so they can create a career right here at home," she said.



Rayniyah Ilaraza during Sunday night's Miss St. Croix competition (Credit: DEAR Productions, V.I. Consortium)

Ms. Philip's responses centered on community wellbeing and civic engagement. When asked what she believed was most critical to preserving Virgin Islands traditions, she highlighted mental health as a foundational concern. "If you're mental isn't doing okay, there's no way that we can make sure that our community is surviving," she said. Her second judged question focused on encouraging youth participation in policymaking. Ms. Philip noted the high level of engagement among young people on social media and mentioned the V.I. Consortium and government agencies for maintaining active online platforms. "On these pages, you can find the information necessary...to know about what's going on in our community and how you can be involved," she said.

The swimwear segment followed, with both contestants presenting contrasting interpretations within a similar color palette. Ms. Ilaraza modeled an orange monokini concealed beneath a floor-length floral coverup, revealing a strappy, bedazzled swimsuit accented with blue gems at the collar and hips. Ms. Philip appeared in a one-shouldered monokini featuring patterned fabric and embroidered embellishments along the cutouts, paired with a short, fringed blue coverup.



Amenti Phillip during Sunday night's Miss St. Croix pageant (Credit: DEAR Productions, V.I. Consortium)

Next came contemporary cultural attire, a segment described by host Sheldon Turnbull as a “modern evolution” of the pageant that “honors tradition while embracing innovation and personal expression.” Ms. Ilaraza used the segment to highlight Pressure Buss Pipe as a Virgin Islands icon, modeling a black-and-white plaid ruffled gown with a tearaway front panel that revealed hot-pink satin trousers. Ms. Philip selected Asta Williams as her cultural icon and wore a madras head tie with a crisp white long-sleeved shirt and a tiered ruffled miniskirt combining madras, green gingham, and orange gingham fabrics.

Both contestants then delivered their ambassadorial statements before preparing for the evening gown segment. Ms. Ilaraza appeared in a gown constructed of sheer red mesh over a nude mini-length underskirt, encrusted with gems and finished with epaulets adorned with dangling beaded strands. Ms. Philip followed in a neon yellow gown featuring mesh panels in the bodice, bedazzled detailing, epaulettes at the shoulders, and a flowing cape and train.

After all competitive segments concluded, the audience was treated to musical entertainment and behind-the-scenes commentary while judges finalized their scores. When the results were announced, contestant No. 2, Amenti Philip, emerged with the highest total and was crowned Miss St. Croix 2025–2026, closing out the festival’s pageantry with a performance that balanced confidence, cultural insight, and composure.

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