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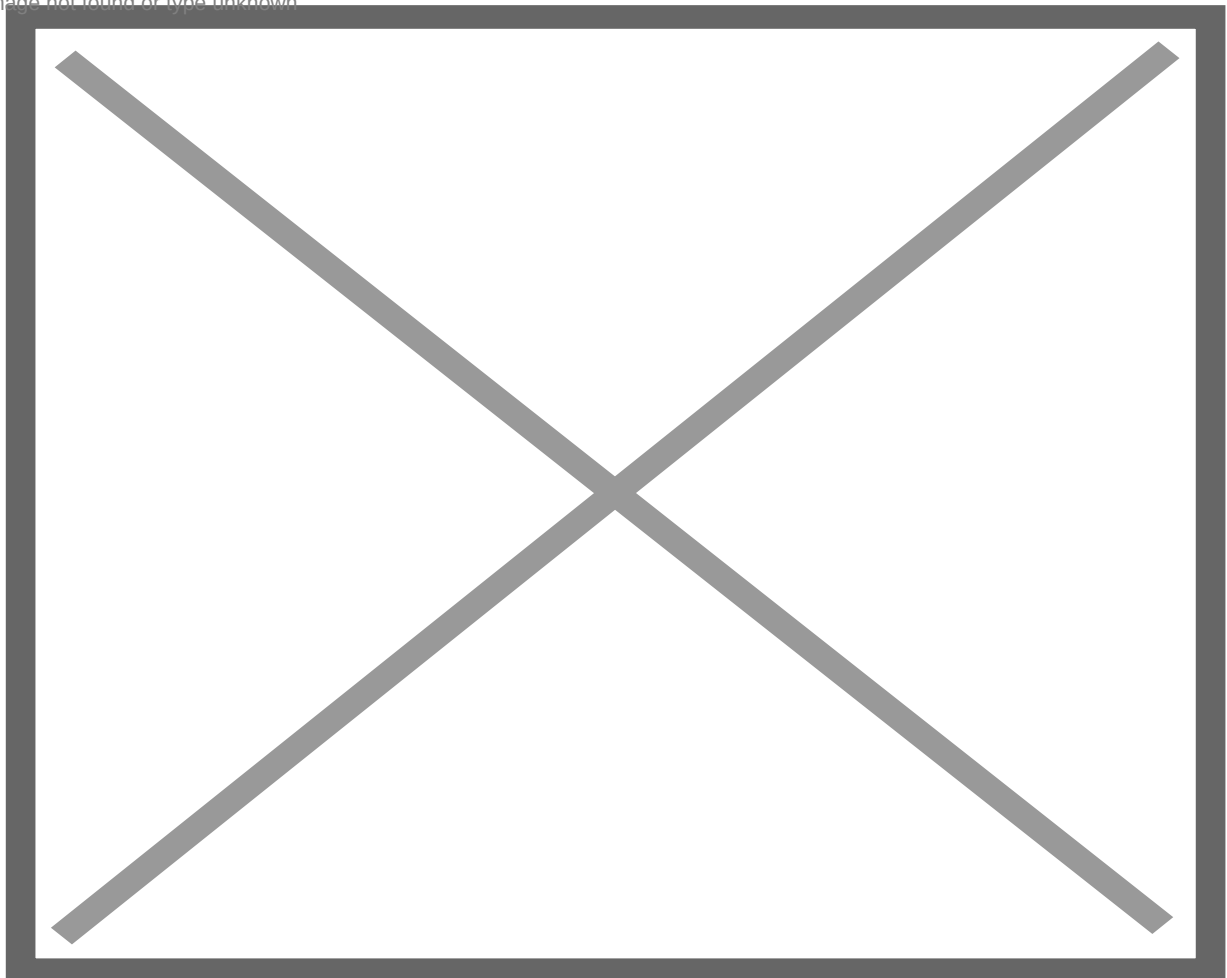
## Virgin Islands Mourns Bradley Christian, Cultural Guardian Who Preserved Quadrille and Helped Shape Official Madras

**Bradley Christian, longtime leader of the St. Croix Heritage Dancers and a key advocate for the official V.I. madras, is being remembered for decades spent teaching quadrille, head-tie traditions, Crucian cuisine and cultural history across generations.**

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Bradley Christian, a longtime Virgin Islands culture bearer, quadrille caller and cultural preservationist whose work helped carry Crucian traditions forward and contributed to the creation of the territory's official madras.

Bradley Christian, a longtime St. Croix culture bearer whose work encompassed quadrille, traditional head-tie tying, Crucian cuisine, storytelling and the development of the official Virgin Islands madras, has died, prompting tributes from territorial leaders who remembered him as a teacher and guardian of traditions he spent decades working to preserve.

Christian was a master quadrille caller and longtime leader of the St. Croix Heritage Dancers, teaching generations about the dance and other elements of Virgin Islands culture. He also spent 36 years in public service devoted to cultural preservation, including work at Fort Frederik Museum and service as a cultural specialist with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

His cultural work stretched back decades. In a 2023 WTJX interview, Christian said he began his government career as a museum aide, advanced to associate curator and later became a cultural specialist before retiring after 36 years. He also described taking quadrille instruction and its history into schools and community organizations.

Christian was also an author. His book, *Quadrille: The Official Dance of the U.S. Virgin Islands*, explored the history and traditions surrounding the territory's official dance. In the WTJX interview, he discussed the research behind the book and the people who helped preserve the tradition.

### **Decades With the St. Croix Heritage Dancers**

Christian's connection to the St. Croix Heritage Dancers was documented nationally more than two decades ago. A 2004 tribute entered into the Congressional Record by then-Delegate Donna M. Christensen identified Christian, Norma Christian and Claudia Walker among the organization's first officers after the group was founded by Enrique Santos. The tribute recognized Christian's commitment to preserving cultural dances for future generations.

The Heritage Dancers carried Virgin Islands traditions beyond the territory. Smithsonian archival records from the 1990 Festival of American Folklife identify Christian as a quadrille caller and masquerader from Frederiksted performing with the St. Croix Heritage Dancers.

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. said Christian's work with the group introduced generations of residents to quadrille and its significance.

"As a master quadrille caller, teacher and longtime leader of the St. Croix Heritage Dancers, Bradley introduced generations of Virgin Islanders to the history, discipline and beauty of quadrille. He also shared his deep knowledge of traditional dress, head-tie tying, food and other customs that form an important part of our identity."

The governor also highlighted Christian's public service and his role in representing the territory outside the Virgin Islands.

"His commitment to culture was also reflected in his decades of public service. Bradley spent 36 years working in cultural preservation, including at Fort Frederik Museum and as a cultural specialist with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources.

"He carried Virgin Islands traditions well beyond our shores, representing the Territory across the Caribbean and the United States, including at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival."

### **Helping Establish an Official Virgin Islands Madras**

Christian was also among the culture bearers who spent years pushing for an official madras representing the Virgin Islands.

Sen. Novelle Francis Jr. recalled Christian's "unwavering advocacy for an official Virgin Islands madras fabric" and noted that the 33rd Legislature passed Bill 33-0226, which became Act 8424 and established the territorial madras. Francis said Christian worked on that effort alongside other culture bearers including Delta Dorsch, Dr. Gene Emanuel, Ruth Moolenaar and former Sen. Myron D. Jackson.

The official madras became law in January 2021 and was publicly unveiled later that year. Accounts of the project identify Christian and the St. Croix Heritage Dancers as central participants in the years-long effort that helped bring the territorial fabric from concept to adoption.

Bryan, who signed the designation into law, said Christian's influence remains visible in the symbol.

"His influence can also be seen in one of the symbols Virgin Islanders now wear with great pride. Bradley helped inspire the effort to create an official Virgin Islands madras, an idea that ultimately became reality. I was proud to sign that designation into law in 2021."

### **Plaskett: "A True Keeper of Our Culture"**

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett described Christian as a cultural icon whose understanding extended beyond individual traditions to their history and meaning.

"Today, the Virgin Islands lost a true keeper of our culture. Bradley Christian spent his life carrying forward traditions passed down through generations. He was known far beyond our shores for his beautifully crafted head wraps, but Bradley's gift was never just in the craft itself. It was in his deep understanding of the history, heritage, and meaning behind every head wrap, our food, storytelling, quelbe, quadrille - the many elements of our islands. Bradley Christian reminded us to love ourselves and our history - that we are a tapestry of beautiful people. His hand also helped shape the official madras of the Virgin Islands, a symbol our people wear with pride," said Congresswoman Plaskett.

Plaskett extended condolences to Christian's family.

"Bradley was one of our territory's cultural icons, and we are forever grateful for his contributions. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, his children, his grandchildren, and all his loved ones and friends during this difficult time. May they find comfort in knowing how deeply his legacy is felt across the Virgin Islands," Congresswoman Plaskett concluded.

### **Francis Remembers a "Living Repository" of Crucian Culture"**

Francis described Christian as a "native son" whose knowledge encompassed Crucian history, dance, music, cuisine and the symbolism of the traditional headtie.

"I am deeply saddened to hear that we have lost our native son Bradley Christian. Our territory has lost one of our most important culture bearers, who was a living repository of our Crucian history, traditions, dance and music. He was as equally committed to protecting our culture as he was to ensuring that it was taught to other generations. Many will remember him for his extensive knowledge of the symbolism of the headtie and knowledge of quadrille, a subject of which he

authored a book in his later years.”

Francis also remembered Christian’s knowledge of food and local delicacies.

“Like many across the community, I will remember Bradley as a master of Crucian cuisine and local delicacies. I will also remember his unwavering advocacy for an official Virgin Islands madras fabric. In the 33rd Legislature, I was honored to join my colleagues in passing Bill 33-0226, now Act 8424, establishing the official madras of the Virgin Islands – something that Bradley, along with other culture bearers to include Delta Dorsch, Dr. Gene Emanuel, Ruth Moolenaar and former Senator Myron D. Jackson had worked for decades to achieve.”

Francis said Christian’s work will continue through those who learned from him.

“Bradley’s life efforts to keep our Crucian culture alive were not in vain. His legacy is present in every quadrille dancer, every storyteller, and every person who understands the origins of our rich traditions and can carry that knowledge forward. He was simply extraordinary as a keeper and teacher of our culture and will be deeply missed.

“My heartfelt condolences are offered to his family, friends, and all who mourn his passing. May he rest in peace.”

### **Bryan: His Legacy Lives in Those He Taught**

Bryan characterized Christian as one of the territory’s “most devoted cultural guardians.”

“Today, the Virgin Islands mourns the loss of one of our most devoted cultural guardians.

“Bradley dedicated his life to preserving and teaching the traditions that define us as a people. He understood that culture endures only when it is shared, practiced and passed on.”

The governor said Christian’s legacy extends beyond a list of accomplishments.

“Bradley leaves behind far more than a record of accomplishments. His legacy lives in the dancers he taught, the traditions he preserved, the knowledge he shared and the generations who better understand their heritage because of his work.”

Bryan concluded by extending condolences on behalf of Lt. Gov. Tregenza Roach, the administration and the territory.

“At this difficult time, my prayers are especially with Bradley’s wife and family as they mourn the loss of a husband, loved one and the man they knew beyond his many contributions to our community. I pray they find strength and comfort in the love surrounding them and in knowing how deeply Bradley was respected and appreciated throughout the Virgin Islands.

“On behalf of Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, our Administration and the people of the Virgin Islands, I extend my deepest condolences to his wife and family, the St. Croix Heritage Dancers and our entire cultural community.”