

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Crucian Latin Caribbean Pig Roast Festival Celebrates 10th Anniversary, Organizers Disappointed With Low Turnout

Business / **Published On December 08, 2014 02:17 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **December 08, 2014**



Sunday was a celebratory day for members of St. Croix's Latin community, as the Crucian Latin Caribbean Pig Roast Festival commemorated its 10th anniversary at the D. C. Canegata Ballpark in Christiansted. However, festival organizers say turnout has declined substantially over the years and its continuation remains in question.

Indeed, while the park was flanked with vendors on either side, where pockets of people could be seen eating and drinking, the center was hollow. The Sabor Tropical band out of Puerto Rico played, but hardly anyone danced.

Juan Ayala, one of the event's original organizers, told *VI Consortium* he believes a new generation of leaders should take the helm and steer the festival in a different direction in order to revive it.

"At this point it's dying," Ayala said. "Usually, the location would be packed with people."

José Nieves, founder of Epok Signs & Banners, who was given an award for being an outstanding young, Latin business owner, also commented on the festival's evolution.

"Generations change, so you have to change with it," Nieves said. "This is the typical music from Puerto Rico when you go to the countryside. This could only pull certain crowds."

Nieves said he attends the festival because he supports the vendors, "but I wouldn't stay long if my wife wasn't here," he laughed. "That's why [Ayala] is saying we need to change generations."

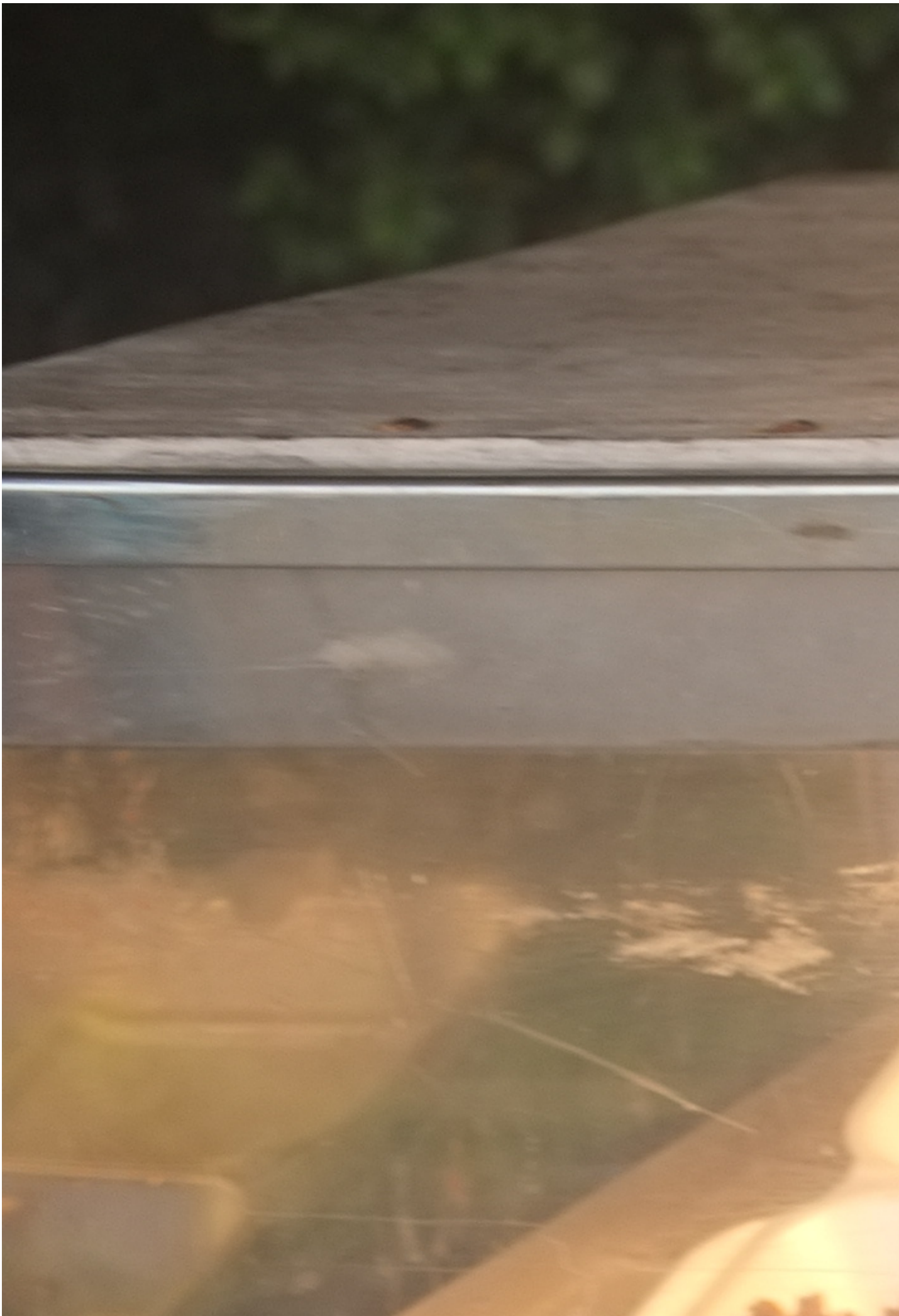






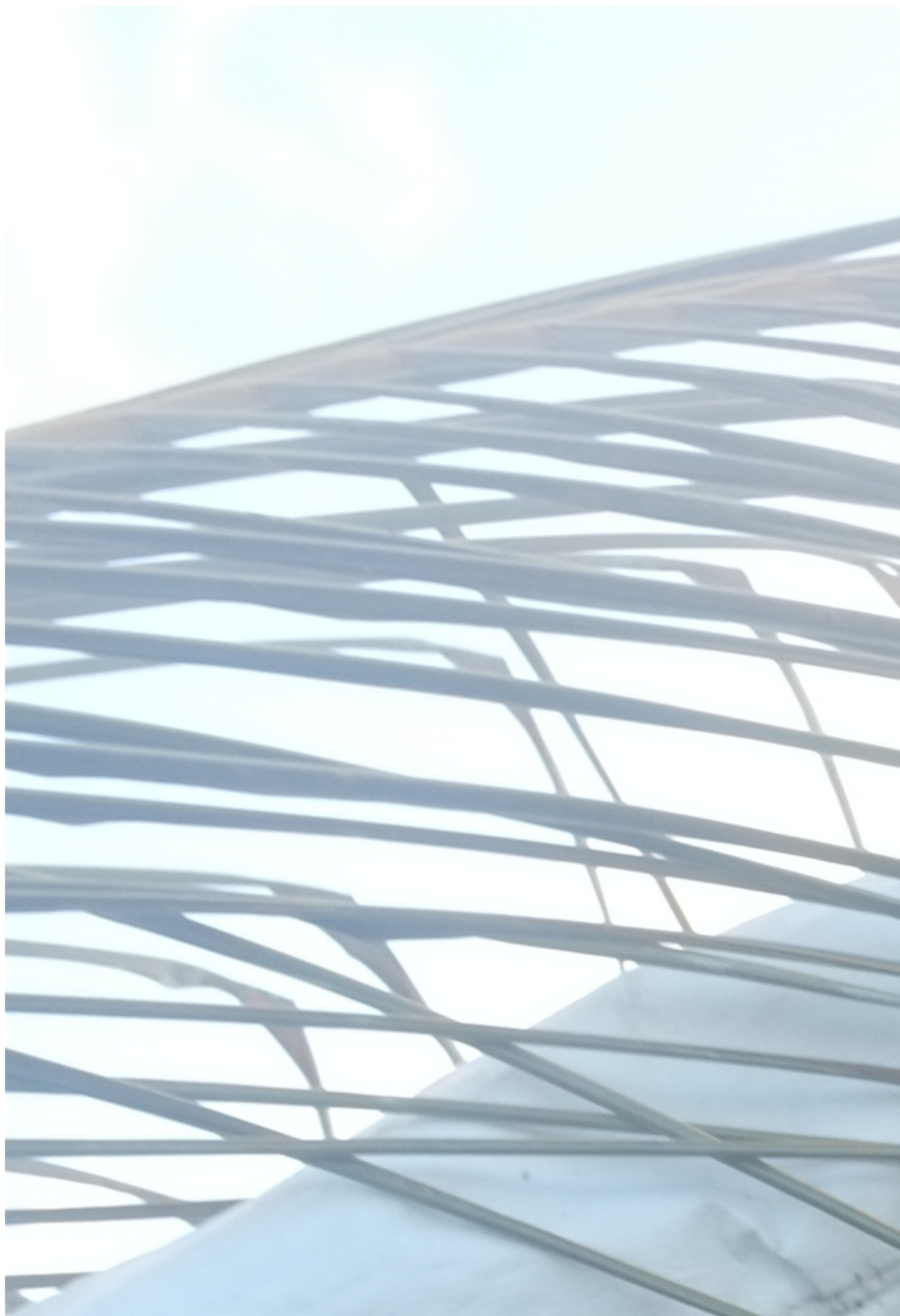








































The Crucian Latin Pig Roast Festival seeks to highlight the Latin community's culture on St. Croix and is generally attended by successful Latin entrepreneurs, influential persons and political leaders. However, this year, the turnout of the island's political leadership was also low and Nieves expressed his disappointment.

"I'm actually kind of upset," Nieves, who is also very active politically, said. "The only senator that came today was Terrence "Positive" Nelson. Delegate to Congress Donna M. Christensen was here earlier, [but] out of all the new senators that got in, none of them came. If tomorrow was election day, all of them would have been here."

Nieves sees the event as one that should be attended by families, as he says it's an occasion tailored for people to come together and enjoy the culture that binds them.

"It's about bringing back the culture in the Latin community," Nieves said. "When Christmas time comes, they roast the pigs--they have all these little fried foods that's cultural to the Latin community, and they gather vendors. There's [also] a competition to see who have the best pig roast."

Sunday's gathering was the first time the festival was held at the Canegata Ballpark, and some speculate that the new venue may have played a role in the low turnout. Previously, the festival was held at the Castle Coakley Ballpark.

There was still optimism, however, as the mood of those in attendance was generally jovial, made evident by the pockets of people eating and talking.

Juanita Ayala, Juan Ayala's wife, who was stationed at her booth selling roast pork served with seasoned rice, red bread, green bananas, cassava and tannia, said that although the event was not bigger, it was better.

"The event has been great and successful, it's not getting bigger, but it's better. It's been great," she said.

However, she also sided with her husband's sentiments.

"There have been lesser people I guess because of the location, but we used to do better with the pork at Castle Coakley. We used to have a bigger crowd," she said.

"The Roast Pork Festival, people are kind of drawing away from it and I don't know why that is, [but] I think a lot has to do with the music. We need to kind of change it around a little bit so we could bring more people out," Mrs. Ayala concluded.