

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Locals On the Rise: Virgin Islander Makes Academic History As Valedictorian Of Inaugural Class Of BAU International University In Washington, D.C.

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On Friday, October 2 the U.S. Virgin Islands once again took center stage on the mainland, this time in notice of the academic achievements of one of its daughters. Ephra W. Graham, originally of St. Croix, walked across the stage at The National Press Club in Washington, D.C. to receive a hard-earned master's degree and give the valedictory address for the inaugural graduating class of BAU International University, which was founded in the nation's capital in 2014. Ms. Graham was one of 14 members of the Class of 2015 and earned an MBA in Executive Management with a concentration in international entrepreneurship.

Ms. Graham, 33, a former student at Evelyn M. Williams Elementary, Lew Muckle Elementary, Arthur A. Richards Jr. High and the St. Croix Educational Complex, praised her friends, mother and family for helping her achieve this significant milestone. In her speech, Ms. Graham recounted how her mother, Ms. Gloria Graham—who traveled from St. Croix to attend the ceremony—would often pray for each of her eight children, asking God to bless them so that they could in turn be a blessing to the world. Ms. Graham vowed to do just that in front of the intimate group of businessmen, members of the Washington, D.C. press, and dignitaries, including Turkey’s Ambassador to the U.S., Mr. Serdar K?l?ç; Bahç?ehir U?ur Educational Institutions’ Chairman of the Board of



Ephra Graham, middle, is

seen with BAU International professors and leadership.

Of her achievement, Ms. Graham said she is humbled and credits it to hard work, prayers and perseverance, which included traveling for about an hour into D.C. from her home in Maryland each Saturday for a full day of intensive class work over the last year.

“There were times I wanted to give up and throw in the towel. Going to work all week and then spending all day in class on Saturday, plus completing online assignments during the week was extremely taxing. But, I had a goal in mind and knew that giving up was not an option for me,” she said.

Ms. Graham says her studies and connections made at BAU will enable her to launch certain entrepreneurial endeavors here at home and across the broader Caribbean, something she is passionate about.

“I am passionate about all things Caribbean, nature and conservation, social entrepreneurship, art and design, economic development, education, youth and philanthropy,” she said.

Damarie Velázquez, a fellow Crucian and architectural consultant living in the Washington, D.C. area, attended the commencement ceremony and wrote to Ms. Graham following the event: “You are an exemplary representation of St. Croix and a beautiful reminder of hope for our beloved island. I can’t begin to tell you how incredibly

proud I am of you.” The two ladies first became acquainted with each other at the ceremony.

It seems that God is indeed answering Gloria Graham’s prayers, as she is also the proud mother of Horace Graham, Jr., director of licensing at DLCA, St. Croix; Dr. Emmanuel Graham, owner and chief urologist at GU Center in St. Croix; Cynthia Graham, public relations director for the Department of Education; and Ms. H. Lisa Baptist, owner of Sweet Magnolia, a new fashion boutique in Christiansted, St. Croix. Ms. Graham previously earned a bachelor of science degree in television/radio and a master’s degree in communications from Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY.

BAU International University, Washington D.C.

Located a block away from the White House, BAU International University opened its doors in the nation’s capital in August of 2014. As a member of BAU Global, BAU International University Washington D.C. now joins the BAU Global family, which has campuses in Istanbul, Berlin, Silicon Valley, Hong Kong, Batumi, Rome, Cologne, and Toronto.