

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Sir Hilary Beckles Of The University Of The West Indies To Speak At UVI 2016 Commencement

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Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, vice chancellor of The University of the West Indies, will be the keynote speaker at the University of the Virgin Islands' 2016 commencement ceremonies. These ceremonies will take place on Thursday, May 12, at the Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas; and on Friday, May 13, on the campus grounds of the Albert A. Sheen Campus on St. Croix. Both ceremonies will begin at 1:30 p.m.

"We have selected a keynote speaker who is the epitome of academic excellence and an outstanding Caribbean scholar," said UVI President David Hall. "We want the presence and words of Sir Hilary Beckles to inspire our graduates to reach for the stars of their own aspirations, and to contribute to the intellectual, educational and economic growth of the

Caribbean as Sir Hilary has done through his work.”

Before assuming the position of vice chancellor at The University of the West Indies in May 2015, Beckles served the university as pro-vice chancellor and principal of its Cave Hill Campus in Barbados for 13 years. His distinguished career within the university began at age 36 when he became its youngest scholar to be promoted to a personal chair. As a professor of economic and social history, he won the first Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in the field of research. He has since been recognized globally for his academic achievements and leadership expertise, serving on many United Nations committees and advisory panels. He is the Vice President of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Slave Route Project and Editor of the Ninth Volume of UNESCO’s General History of Africa Series which he conceptualized around the Global Africa framework. Sir Hilary is also chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Commission on Reparations, and is a member of the United Nations Development Program Advisory Panel of the Caribbean Human Development Report.

Beckles received his higher education in the United Kingdom. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economic and Social History, and a Ph.D. from Hull University. He has lectured extensively throughout Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia, and has published more than 100 essays, books and monographs on subjects ranging from Atlantic and Caribbean history, gender relations in the Caribbean, sport development, and popular culture. He has received numerous awards for his scholarly contributions, including honorary doctor of letters degrees from Brock University in Canada, the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Hull University and the Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology in Ghana. In 2007, Sir Hilary was made a Commander Knight of St. Andrew (KA), Barbados’ highest honour, in recognition of his distinguished service in the fields of Education, Sports and the Arts. Beckles also maintains numerous involvements in the Caribbean private sector, and is a long serving director of Sagicor Financial Corporation – the largest international financial services conglomerate in the region. In addition to being a distinguished university administrator, internationally reputed economic historian, and transformational leader in higher education, Sir Hilary is a keen cricketer and researcher of cricket history and culture. He is also an accomplished playwright with six of his staged works receiving popular acclaim.

Beckles will be given an honorary doctorate at the 2016 commencement ceremony. Renowned Virgin Islanders Ruth Moolenaar of St. Thomas and Richard A. Schrader, Sr. of St. Croix will also receive honorary doctorates at this year’s commencement for their cultural and intellectual contributions to the territory.

“Moolenaar and Schrader serve as excellent role models for our graduates and for all of us, because they remind us that our greatest wealth is the untapped precious gems that are buried inside each of us and await the right opportunity and nurturing environment for them to spring forth,” said President Hall.

Ruth Moolenaar, who will receive an honorary doctorate at the St. Thomas commencement ceremony, has touched the lives of countless Virgin Islanders through her work as an educator – first as a teacher, later as a principal, and finally as vice-chair of the Board of Education. “Service before self” has been a guiding principle in her life, along with her belief that knowledge of and pride in one’s culture is fundamental to one’s

sense of self. She has published numerous volumes of cultural history and biography that highlight the Virgin Islands, among them her monograph on the settlement of the “Savan” neighborhood, which in 1991 was included in the publications of the “American Folklife Festival” of the Smithsonian Institution.

After 42 years of service, Moolenaar retired from the VI Department of Education with no intention to stop working. Following her election to the Board of Education in 1992, she became active in several gubernatorial and senatorial campaigns. She served on many civic and cultural boards including the Business and Professional Women’s Organizations and the League of Women Voters. A 1940 graduate of Charlotte Amalie High School, Moolenaar earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Cheyney State College; her Master’s degree in Educational Administration from New York University; and she completed postgraduate studies at the University of Hartford and the University of Illinois. Moolenaar is the recipient of many awards: she was commended by the 20th Legislature of the VI in 1994 through Resolution Number 1510; received the League of Women Voters Impact Award in 1997, the prestigious Humanist Award in 1993 from the VI Humanities Council, and their VI Scholar Award in 2006. She was married to Lucien Moolenaar, Sr., who is deceased, and had four children including an adopted daughter.

The recipient of the honorary doctorate on St. Croix will be Richard A. Schrader, Sr. whose life trajectory has taken him from working alongside his parents in the sugarcane fields of St. Croix, to the U.S. Army, to the world of prison administration, to the craft of writing poetry – most of which has been inspired by his beloved home island. He completed two military tours in Germany where he also earned his General Educational Development. Following his honorable discharge from military service, he moved to New York where he received his first corrections training at Riker’s Island, and later his Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from John Jay College in Manhattan.

Upon moving back to St. Croix, Schrader was appointed assistant prison warden at the Richmond Penitentiary in 1965. He later served as acting warden and then warden at the Golden Grove Correctional Facility on St. Croix. During that time he received a Master of Arts degree in Education from the College of the Virgin Islands, and spent a month in Denmark on a George C. Marshall Scholarship grant studying the Danish prison system.

After retiring from the field of law enforcement in 1985, Schrader picked up a pen and found his voice. Inspired by a weekend on Blue Mountain as a national guardsman, he was able to view the entire island and decided to capture it for eternity with his seminal poem, “St. Croix by Night.” Since writing his first book, “Home Sweet Home” in 1986, St. Croix and her people became his muse. Over the past 30 years and in 28 books, Schrader has vividly rendered Virgin Islands traditions and folklore. In recognition of his literary contributions to the history and traditions of St. Croix, he has received numerous awards and honors, including the Virgin Islands Humanities Council 1994 “Humanist of the Year” award. He is married to the former Claudette Davis; they have four children.