

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Father And Daughter, Who Graduated On Same Day At UVI, Recount Journey

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In the following article, Berle Wallace and his daughter Berlina Wallace-Berube, [who graduated together at UVI on Friday](#), give accounts of their journey. The article was submitted to The Consortium by Mrs. Wallace-Berube on Saturday.

My Journey through UVI By Berle Wallace

ST. CROIX -- This was a long, tiresome but rewarding journey. It began when, one day, my wife Hyma and my daughter Berlina told me I was smart, so I should go to UVI. I believed them (until I attended the first statistics class) so I went to sit the GED exam. I had to fly to St. Thomas to do the exam because for some strange reason: there was no

one on St. Croix to proctor it.

Although it had been 35 years since I left the Dominica Grammar School, I passed the GED exam, and proceeded to register at UVI. While registering, the first impression I got was how cordial Ms. Barry and her staff were to all of us who were frantically filling out forms and asking questions. I later learned that this friendly nature, and gentle and caring spirit, was characteristic of most individuals at UVI: the professors, IT personnel, secretaries, Maintenance staff, and especially the students, all made me feel comfortable and proud to be part of this institution.

I started this journey pursuing a major in process technology, but after three semesters I realized that my love for history, and imparting knowledge, was stronger than my desire to manipulate instruments. I then changed my major to secondary education/social science. I am elated to graduate with a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree. The opportunities for serving the Virgin Islands, and my native home Dominica, are endless!

Of course, sharing this opportunity with my daughter, Berlina Wallace-Berube, who is receiving her second master's degree, is priceless. Special thanks go out to the Almighty God, to my wife Hyma Wallace, My mother Sarah Wallace, other members of my family, professors, classmates, friends, and well-wishers.

A Daughter's Reflection on Her Father's Journey By Berlina Wallace-Berube

Growing up in a home with a father who read almost every book and turned every opportunity into a teachable moment, I knew I had to go to college. However, in 1999 when I graduated from high school it had been a few years since my parents, Berle and Hyma Wallace had relocated to St. Croix with my brother, Berle Wallce Jr. and I. They were still experiencing financial challenges as we adjusted to a new community. My father, who worked as a landscaper at the time, ensured that I had the money to attend the University of the Virgin Islands. As a matter of fact, in our home, I would often joke that grass equaled money.

Many individuals on St. Croix who did not know my dad while we lived in Dominica knew him for three things: cutting grass, growing vegetables and fruits, and preaching the Word of God. I can still remember the days when people would tell me they hadn't seen my dad in a while and I would explain it was because he was working at Central High School. People with earnest hearts and genuine curiosity would ask if he got a contract to cut the grass there. I wouldn't get offended because I knew they only knew the man who cut grass to ensure that his family's needs were met.

They didn't know the genius historian I had grown up with who would often joke that I think he knows everything. They didn't know the man who owned three photo studios and a bookstore in Dominica. They didn't know the man who worked for the Agriculture Department of Dominica. They didn't know the man who was willing to relocate and start over on an island where no one knew his many accomplishments to work hard and provide for his family and other individuals. And that was okay because my dad taught me that whether you are going to work in a suit or gardening clothes, whether you are preaching before crowds or taking the time to have a one-on-one conversation with a homeless young man, whether you are acknowledged or people stand in disbelief when they see you all cleaned up, you are YOU and you can make a difference in any

capacity, anywhere you are.

It was because I knew my dad's prior accomplishments, untapped potential, and passion for learning that I told my mom one day that I think my father should attend UVI. She immediately agreed and we discussed it with him. My dad was apprehensive at first because it had been a long time since he had attended school and like many other individuals from the Eastern Caribbean, he would have to ignore his prior accomplishments and take the GED. My dad was determined to begin his educational journey and when he was told that there was no one to proctor the exam on St. Croix; he flew all the way to St. Thomas to take the test and passed it on the first try. His story has served as an inspiration for many, especially the individuals at the GED program at the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church which I began in 2008 when I served as the Women's Ministries Leader. My dad continues to serve as the on-site coordinator of the program and also teaches various subjects.

My father's life has been a miraculous one. You see, my father was not supposed to be alive. He was deathly ill as a child; but my grandparents, Philsbert and Sarah Wallace, were determined that he would survive. My father was so sick that often when my grandparents would take him for medical attention, people would see them passing with him and would make comments like, "Where they going with that?" and "They can't see that there done dead already?" My grandfather once walked 17 miles while carrying my father through the rugged terrain of mountainous Dominica to get my father medical attention. It was all part of a divine plan because without a Berle there would be no Berlina. Because of my grandparents' tenacity and God's grace, my father is alive and healthy today.

During my educational journey at UVI, I have won numerous awards including humanities awards, psychology awards, and other academic awards. I was also inducted into the Golden Key International Honour Society and Psi Chi: The International Honor Society in Psychology. I have had the opportunity to present my research at the Caribbean Exploratory NIMHD Center's Health Disparities Conference and the 9th Annual Conference on Health Disparities and 2016 Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program -- but nothing has given me as much joy or has made me as proud to know that as I graduate with my second master's degree from UVI, my father will be graduating with me with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Sciences. Both of us are C.L.A.S.S (College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences) graduates. One father who was determined that his daughter would receive the education needed to be successful in this community and one daughter who always knew her father would be able to surmount every obstacle to accomplish his goal graduated together on May 13, 2016. What a glorious day!