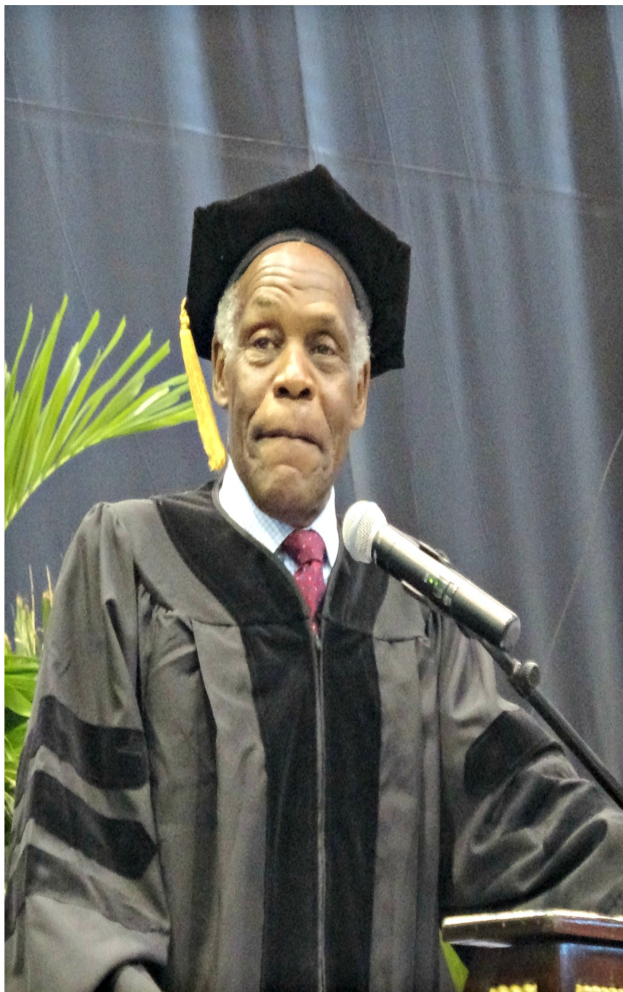


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Danny Glover To UVI's 2018 Graduates: 'It Is Time For A New Era'

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ST. THOMAS -- Two hundred and two graduates received diplomas at the University of the Virgin Islands' commencement ceremony on Thursday on St. Thomas. Graduates of UVI filled the stage with bedazzled hats, with some graduates wearing plaid pants and other bold wardrobe choices.

Speakers on Thursday afternoon included Governor Kenneth Mapp, Senate President Myron D. Jackson, UVI President Dr. David Hall and world renowned American actor and political activist Danny Glover, who graced the stage of the university's sports and fitness center with words of encouragement and empowerment in a world of uncertainty.

Mr. Glover told graduates that they embodied “excellence and tenacity.” “Right now we have the foundation and platform to push government,” Mr. Glover said. “It is time for a new era.” The actor has many accolades and has been awarded the Independent Spirit Award for Best Male Lead, a BET Humanitarian Award in 2004 and the NAACP Image Award – President’s Award this year. He’s acted in a range of notable films, including Predator 2, The Color Purple and Lethal Weapon. Graduates seized the opportunity to post photos, shout outs and memes of Mr. Glover on social media with family and friends in real time at the ceremony.

Governor Kenneth Mapp’s address to graduates this year was different from past addresses. In his speech, the governor said that Hurricanes Irma and Maria “changed the course of our lives” and “brought us tremendous opportunity for a brighter future in the Virgin Islands.” In a seven-minute speech, the governor took six minutes to discuss job opportunities and gave a surprising announcement. “By May 30th, the [Senate] president will have increased salaries across the entire government,” Mr. Mapp said. At last year’s commencement ceremony, Mr. Mapp told UVI graduates that the Virgin Islands government was ready to hire them on the spot. It’s unclear if the governor managed to make good on his promise.

Refocusing on the graduates, the governor added, “The government of the Virgin Islands is open for business and recruiting,” noting that this year, his invitation to graduates was more profound due to the Virgin Islands’ access to over \$8 billion in federal funds and disaster grants.

Some of the new graduates expressed a desire to affect change in the territory. After earning his master’s in biology and psychology, St. Kitts native and Virgin Islander Duryan Cozier expressed excitement and optimism when talking about his next steps to impact the Virgin Islands and his hometown. “As far as the first year goes, I’m definitely going to be spending a lot of time in the VI -- definitely want to bring back something to the Caribbean in terms of psychology and mental health.”

Khafren Sackey and Amiel Brown, both resident assistants (RA) at UVI, talked about the slew of organizations they were a part of and the symbolism behind their various graduation stoles. Mr. Sackey, a psychology major, took the time to plug his fellow graduate by saying, “I’ll just use this time to insert that this is UVI’s most powerful student right here” -- Amiel Brown received a dual degree, leaving the university with a master of accounting and master of business administration.

The university handed out diplomas to students once enrolled in its School of graduate studies, school of business, school of education, college of liberal arts and social sciences, school of nursing and its college of science and mathematics.

Mr. Hall awarded Danny Glover and Addie Ottley honorary degrees for their community contributions (Holland Redfield will receive his honorary degree during St. Croix’s commencement today). After all the speeches were out of the way, diplomas were in order. Graduates cheered as their moment had finally come.

Like most big events in 2018, the recurring themes of the ceremony were resilience and VI pride. “Winning, achieving, succeeding does not and should never be grounds for settling, class of 2018 we cannot afford to settle,” said Jaecena C. Howell, a Class of

2018 graduate.

Along with the graduates on the St. Thomas campus, 11 students at UVI's extension campus in St. Martin also graduated as part of the 2018 class. One hundred and eight students will graduate during the St. Croix event today.

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