

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Foundation Hosts Weeklong Community-Building Activities With World Renowned Change Agent

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The St. Croix Foundation is hosting a week of activities geared towards empowering organizations within the nonprofit sector and for the community at-large to become change agents, the nonprofit said in a release issued Wednesday.

On August 6 and 7, the foundation will be joined by Tuesday Ryan-Hart, seen above, an internationally renowned systems change strategist who has worked with organizations and stakeholders engaged in community building, according to the release. The foundation said it enlisted Ms. Ryan-Hart, who will be introducing the community to a new

concept of community engagement, entitled “The Art of Hosting,” to help build capacity in our community through conversations and training around high impact collaborations and self-empowerment.

The public is invited to RSVP at stxartofhosting.eventbrite.com for the keynote address, ‘Re-Inventing Our Collaborations,’ which will take place on Monday, August 6, at the Bennie and Martha Benjamin Conferencing Center at the Virgin Islands Cardiac Center at 5:30 p.m., according to the release.

On August 9 and 10, the foundation will host Edward Jones of the Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) and the Black Social Change Funders Network. The Black Social Change Funders Network (BSCFN) is a network of funders committed to creating thriving Black communities by strengthening the infrastructure for Black-led and social change, according to the release.

In March, ABFE President & CEO Susan Taylor Batten visited St. Croix with a number of local philanthropy executives for the foundation’s annual Funders Forum during which Batten gave a powerful preview of ABFE’s work around community power-building, the release made known.

Mr. Jones, ABFE’s vice president of programs, noted that “ABFE’s goal is to increase philanthropic engagement in St. Croix, St. John, St. Thomas & Puerto Rico. And through BSCFN’s work around blackled and black-serving social change, ABFE is nurturing a shift toward greater social equity for black and brown communities.”

“Over the course of the past year, the Foundation has been sponsoring convenings around the issues of civic leadership, collaboration and community vision building. Ms. Ryan-Hart and Mr. Jones represent the deepening of our commitment to sustained capacity building in our civic sector,” said St. Croix Foundation Executive Director Deanna James.

An extension of the foundation’s nonprofit consortium, which was launched in the summer of 2016 to nurture dynamic collaborations among local nonprofits, BSCFN’s and ABFE’s visit represents a strategic agenda for the foundation to empower and support greater self-sufficiency and sustainability in local nonprofits, according to the release.

Through recent convening with the Southern Partners Fund and the NY Federal Reserve Bank, St. Croix Foundation said it recognizes that many political systems were established upon ideals that perpetuate inequity, and as such change cannot take place until deeply entrenched and inequitable systems are better understood and then reframed with equity as a principle and a practice.

“It is the foundation’s belief that this kind of systems-change can only occur if we arm our community with the necessary information, tools and capacity to be active challengers to the status-quo,” Mrs. James continued. “The work of Ms. Ryan-Hart, and separately the BSCFN, has the potential to positively impact our community by helping stakeholders identify their own voice and therein, their own power and capital.”

During Ms. Hart’s visit, the foundation said it will be convening both community-wide meetings as well as smaller more intimate sessions with local nonprofit stakeholders. The first convening will be a keynote address on Monday and is open to the general public,

including private and public sector stakeholders. The foundation added that it will continue with private sessions with Ms. Ryan-Hart and ABFE's BSCFN throughout the week specifically geared toward their partners in the nonprofit consortium.

The upcoming convening is sponsored in part through TEAM Consultants and the Foundation's Hurricane Recovery CARE Fund. Since the hurricanes, the CARE Fund has awarded over \$300,000 to local nonprofits during its first cycle of strategic grants and has secured an additional \$275,000 for several other organizations through their national advocacy, according to the release. Seeking to stabilize St. Croix's civic sector so that vital nonprofit organizations can become powerful advocates and champions of social justice as well as an organized political power base, the CARE Fund will be awarding a 2nd cycle of grants in upcoming weeks.