

The Virgin Islands Consortium

'The Unbreakable Virgin Islanders' Returns To Territory With Showings In St. Thomas And St. Croix

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ST. THOMAS -- Since debuting on St. Thomas, "Paradise Discovered: The Unbreakable Virgin Islanders", is garnering critical-acclaim nationwide, a recently issued release about the upcoming second screening in the territory says.

The film, directed by renowned Virgin Islands' author and journalist Peter Bailey, captures Bailey himself and a cross-section of Virgin Islanders retelling harrowing tales of surviving hurricanes Irma and Maria. Now Bailey returns to St. Thomas on December 7 for a second showing of the film at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center. On St. Croix, the film will be shown at the St. Croix Educational Complex on Tuesday, Dec. 18 from 10:00 a.m., followed by a Q&A session at 11:00 a.m., Mr. Bailey said.

The territory-wide stop is part of a nationwide screening tour Bailey - a former staff writer at Time and Newsweek well-known for his NiteCap talk show - has embarked on to share what he calls "one of the most inspiring stories in American history that mainstream media missed." The film is based on Bailey's New York Times Op-Ed which he wrote while building a make-shift roof after hurricane Irma destroyed his family's home.

"Unbreakable is the story of how we as a community gave each other light when nature and the rest of the world left us darkness," says Bailey.

He has dedicated this most recent film to his late father Joseph Bailey, who passed away on September 3 after a lengthy battle with Alzheimer's.

The film made its US mainland debut in October at USC's School of Cinematic Arts in Los Angeles as part of the university's "Our Voices" program which invites the brightest minds in filmmaking to discuss their work. Past speakers include legendary director John Singleton and John Chu. The event marked the first time a chapter of Virgin Islands history was showcased at the nation's most prestigious film school.

"Peter's work is so important to the national discourse today," said Desa Philadelphia, a journalist who heads USC's Voices Program. "There should be many rich discussions centered around the themes he explores in his work."

Unbreakable most recently made its east coast debut at the University of Delaware, Bailey's alma mater, to a packed crowd of students, professors and civic leaders.

"I laughed. I cried and identified. Someone is finally telling our story," said an emphatic Sharifa Paul, a high school classmate of Bailey's who drove down from Philadelphia for the event.

Others are calling the film a much-needed education.

"The film taught me a lot about US citizens that I knew nothing about," says Katherine Nails a graduating senior who serves as managing editor of the University of Delaware's student-run newspaper. "You learn that for the Virgin Islanders tragedy brought out the best in their community."

Other upcoming stops on the tour include Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Miami, Providence, Rhode Island and Charleston, South Carolina.

Bailey's goal for the Paradise Discovered series is to advocate for residents of the Virgin Islands and rest of the Caribbean to be included into the nation's cultural and political discourse. The first film from the series, "The Anguilla Connection", debuted in Anguilla - his mother's homeland - in Anguilla.

"If you close your eyes and think of the Virgin Islands you picture a beach," says Bailey. "There are people on these islands. People with hopes and dreams beyond serving rum punch."