

The Virgin Islands Consortium

UVI Graduates 190 In St. Thomas; Andre'a Dorsey Among First To Earn Doctorate Degree In Creative Leadership For Innovation And Change

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ST. THOMAS -- The University of the Virgin Islands on Thursday sent another strong group of individuals into the world better prepared to realize their dreams, after conferring 190 degrees on graduates from a myriad of backgrounds with a myriad of skills. It was yet another successful commencement under the leadership of Dr. David Hall, whose tenure at the HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) has realized growth in a number of areas, including expansion to St. Martin.

Another major accomplishment under Mr. Hall's leadership was the offering of the first ever Ph.D. program at UVI, with the first cohort graduating this year. To get a sense of the program's difficulty, only five were able to complete the three-year course -- three in St. Thomas and two on St. Croix -- from a group that started out with 50 individuals in 2016.

Among the graduates was Dr. Andre'a Dorsey, a Virgin Islands native who was the first in the cohort to complete the defense of the dissertation, along with the entire three-year doctoral program in creative leadership for innovation and change. She was also recognized as the first employee of UVI to achieve the milestone. Ms. Dorsey is an academic advisor at the Center for Student Success, and part-time faculty member.

In an interview with The Consortium on Friday, Ms. Dorsey spoke of the process of attaining the historic achievement "I will definitely say that it required hard work, discipline and commitment," she said. "It was a rigorous program that definitely entailed balancing working a full-time job and attending school full time for three consecutive years. So going through that process required planning, preparation, and sacrificing holidays and weekends to be able to remain on course in achieving my educational and professional goals. I was able to develop more resilience and remain steadfast to be able to translate the skills that I've gained."



Dr. Andre'a Dorsey

She also spoke of her spiritual foundation as part of the reason for her success. "That's definitely a source of inspiration and encouragement for me. I would also definitely recommend to others that you have to be committed, focused, you have to prioritize. You also have to develop plans and be very consistent with what you're doing to be able work ahead and stay ahead."

Ms. Dorsey intends to continue working at UVI; she sees as important the necessity to utilize her skills at home, giving back to her community. "I am very much grateful for the opportunity provided at UVI, and I believe that I now can continue to contribute in meaningful ways in terms of assuming a leadership role at the university," she said.

Along with spiritual guidance, another backbone of Ms. Dorsey's continued success is the support of her family, which she said has been indelible to her success.

The degree itself has added a sense of empowerment to what is possible as a Virgin Islands woman, Ms. Dorsey noted, adding that she hopes the degree will serve as encouragement to others that once you put your mind to something, you can achieve it.

"As someone born and raised in the Virgin Islands, I think this is very symbolic and historic for us. I believe that as a young woman coming from this community, it shows that there is nothing impossible; you just really have to be focused on what you want to achieve in life despite the challenges and obstacles. You can get there. I think my life will represent that message to many," she said.

She concluded, "I'm very passionate about empowering others around me to achieve their greatest potential by living in purpose through the harnessing of their skills, in order to dominate in their space of influence. I believe that my training now enables me to teach others skills that they would need to build other leaders and see higher levels of productivity, and develop sustainable solutions."

Attending the event, as has been customary, were the territory's political leaders, including Governor Albert Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, Senate Vice President Myron Jackson, and Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett. The leaders gave brief congratulatory remarks, while encouraging the new graduates to help with the betterment of the territory.

Keynote speaker Bakari Sellers, a CNN political analyst, former state legislature and lawyer from South Carolina, sought to instill a sense of self-efficacy in the graduates, encouraging them to push through with the dreams even though some may see those dreams as unattainable.

The class' keynote speaker, Anayah Ferris, introduced the attentive audience to the "resilient, determined and ever so phenomenal Class of 2019", as she sought to establish them as "the community's new beacon, the Virgin Islands pride and joy." Her passionate keynote touched on race discrimination on the U.S. mainland and how it has affected the Black community, which she spoke of as a buildup to encourage the new graduates to rise beyond what is expected.