

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CHS Graduates 147 From 'Effervescent Class of 2019'

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ST. CROIX -- It was all pomp and circumstance on Wednesday as St. Croix Central High School's (CHS) graduates, the "Effervescent Class of 2019" celebrated the milestone event with their family, friends, well-wishers, faculty and staff, and community leaders cheering them on. CHS J.R.O.T.C. posted the colors and the CHS jazz band played the national anthem and the Virgin Islands march. CHS anniversary classes were also in attendance.

The keynote speaker, Hannibal "Mike" Ware, SBA inspector general who resides in Washington, DC, is a proud native Virgin Islander and a member of CHS's Elite Class of 1987. He told the students that even though he came from a single parent home, he managed to excel and is now SBA's first black inspector general.

He shared his three keys to success with them: Believe in yourself and be confident that you can do whatever you want to do; keep a positive mind, avoid pointing out all that can go wrong, and be wary of people who do that because research shows that if you are in a negative frame of mind, your creativity suffers. In closing he said, "Hustle, hustle, hustle hard, close mouth don't get feed in this boulevard," because you can believe in yourself all you want and have a good mind set, but if you are not willing to put in the work, you will not get anything accomplished.



Class Valedictorian, Jayla Norman (Courtesy Government House)

CHS acting principal, Yves Abraham, encouraged the graduates to put “must” in their vocabulary. He recommended putting the cellphone down and put in the work to achieve success.

Carlos McGregor, acting insular superintendent of the Department of Education (DOE), and Raquel Berry-Benjamin, D.O.E. commissioner designee, acknowledged students in the crowd like Andy Pemberton who decided to return to school and receive his diploma instead of remaining at his full-time job at LimeTree Bay Terminals. Mrs. Berry-Benjamin encouraged the graduates to find their purpose in life and pursue it.

Governor Albert Bryan had a bit of fun with the graduates when he joked about his favorite philosopher being Popcaan, a successful Jamaican singer and artist, and proceeded to sing lyrics from his song, “[Inviolable](#),” that references not failing but succeeding.



Class Salutatorian Giovane Barnes (Courtesy Government House)

Class Valedictorian, Jayla Norman, has maintained number 1 status at every one of her graduations since elementary school: 6th grade at the Pearl B. Larsen Elementary School and 8th grade at Elena L. Christian Junior High School, and now valedictorian of CHS. She began her speech by displaying true camaraderie to her fellow graduates when she said, "We did it! Period!" She gave credit to her speech and communication teachers by outlining things she learned in their classes that were instrumental in her successfully writing her valedictorian speech.

She advised her fellow graduates to follow their own path and expressed that even though she was heading to college, it may not be every one's first choice. Whether it is joining the military, going to trade school, or becoming a self-made billionaire, it is important to find your purpose and passion in life and do what you love, because without purpose life becomes meaningless, she expressed.



CHS Class of 2019 (Courtesy Government House)

“Our generation must realize that we are part of the most technologically advanced generation. We have been exposed to technology all our lives. We are creating jobs for ourselves and making a lot of money being authentic to who we are and what we like,” she said. She expressed fear of the unknown as she heads out into the “real world” of uncharted territory, but her choice, and many of the other graduates is to turn to God and pray. “I’d like to end by thanking God for covering me in his grace and shielding me from illness. Without Him I would not be standing before you today. I want to thank my parents, JoyAnne and Garry Norman, for raising me to be academically strong and focused, for being patient with me when I disappointed them, and for always loving me even when I felt angry at them for being disciplinarians,” she stated.

Giovane Barnes, the salutatorian, encouraged his classmates to remember that they are not alone, because the graduating class of 2019, he said, will always be family. He said

that facing oncoming and yet unknown obstacles can be a difficult task, “And I am speaking from the experience of an immigrant to the island of St. Croix, who has had to adapt to an educational system that appeared then as an entirely foreign ecosystem at the tender age of seven years old. I know what it is like to be different. Back then, I became aware that I sounded different and that to me was like a sore thumb, it sticks out there and leaves the feeling as though you don’t belong.”



Keynote speaker Hannibal “Mike” Ware and Governor Albert Bryan (Courtesy Government House)

He told the class of 2019 to remain humble and reminded them that their success is fulfilling their purpose in this lifetime while they are creating happiness for humanity along the way. He encouraged them to surround themselves with people who want to see them succeed, who would build them up and be willing to support them even in their struggles. He thanked his parents, Victor and Opal Barnes, for molding him into the young man he

is today and thanked the many people and families who has treated him like family since he arrived on St. Croix.

The top 25 students received special recognition and each proudly stood as their names were called. They are Jayla Norman, Giovane Barnes, Alijah Santos, Alexia A. Adams, Joshua L. Ramsundar, Alayna K. Caraballo, Gira T. Newton, Maria T. Rodriguez, Imari C. Julian, Shadejah S. J. Charles, LaMonique M. Berrios, Zhenya Blair, Tijiera A. C. Matthew, Kendra A. Abbott, Nayelis Saldana, Tatiana Torres, Iyanna Alexander, Richel Ince, Malik Maillard, Tikory Felix, Sedeja Fieulleateau, Gianna Gumbs, Chenille Hendricks, A'kaijah Cammie, and Diamonique Richards.

Presidential awards were announced by Kisha Roberts, the senior class counselor.

After the class sang their class song, Congratulations/Toast," and Chenille Hendricks said the class prayer, Shana Francis delivered the benediction and the St. Croix Central High School Effervescent Class of 2019 stepped out of the realm of high school into the realm of higher education and unlimited possibilities.