

The Virgin Islands Consortium

167 Of 215 C.A.H.S. Graduates Head To UVI; Class Graduates 98 Percent Of Students

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ST. THOMAS -- They called themselves the "Precious, Prominent, Pristine, Impactful Beyond Our Wildest Dreams" Class of 2019. But the Charlotte Amalie High School (C.A.H.S.) graduating class was something else as well: Arguably the most euphoric graduating class in the territory this year. On Sunday during the commencement, the students -- 215 strong -- hopped, danced, screamed, and screamed some more even before making their way to the stage at the University of the Virgin Islands Sports and Fitness Center to receive the high school diploma they had worked so hard for.

The jubilee was with good reason, too. The class had a graduation rate of 98 percent, which, as pointed out by C.A.H.S. Principal Alcede S. Edwards, could reach 100 percent

with planned summer classes. The students earned a combined \$2.8 million in scholarships and, impressively, 167 of the graduates are headed to the University of the Virgin Islands. Also, some of the students are ready upon graduation to operate in a myriad of fields, according to the principal, including 10 nursing assistants, 6 cosmetologists, 3 electricians, 5 electronic technicians, 10 auto mechanics, 10 students of finance, 5 students well versed in computer information systems, 10 office administrative system specialists, 5 computer repair technicians, and 1 plumber.



Another impressive feat, half of the students were honor grads with an average GPA score at or above 83 percent.

Aside from the excitement of receiving their diplomas, the students paid special homage to Njnanya Boyd, the assistant 12th grade principal who appeared to have poured her heart into assuring the students' success. It was Ms. Boyd who set a 100 percent graduation rate for the graduating class, and by the love showed to her on Sunday, she was much more than just an educator to them.

Four students took to the podium to harmonize, a cappella, "I Will Always Love You" by Whitney Houston. Their harmonious singing touched Ms. Boyd as she welled up on the podium. Overwhelmed, she stepped off the stage and onto the main floor to hug the students she had guided to graduation success. Following the Whitney Houston rendition, the school band offered another performance, this one more uptempo. In the end, the students gave Ms. Boyd a group hug. It was an expression of love and appreciation not often seen.



C.A.H.S. Class of 2019 graduates give Njnanya Boyd, the assistant 12th grade principal, a group hug. (Cruselda Roberts, VIC)

Class Salutatorian, Pamela Collin Franco, mainly expressed gratitude to her class, family, friends, and the school's faculty and staff for their support.

Class Valedictorian Jordina Pierre spoke on the importance of perseverance. She used her father as an example, mentioning some difficulty she saw him overcome -- including the loss of a loved one and seeing his life's work destroyed in moments. "He is my greatest role model in perseverance and in life," she said, looking up to the area her father sat.

Keynote Speaker Dr. Virginia Rubaine said, "Pristine Class of 2019 I challenge you to live your life wholeheartedly. That is, cultivate authenticity, let go of what other people think, spend less time on social media and more time on understanding what makes you majestic beyond your wildest dreams."



Governor Albert Bryan sought to encourage the graduates to push beyond what is expected. Quoting Mario Andretti, the legendary race car driver, Mr. Bryan said, "If it doesn't feel scary that means you're not driving fast enough." His intention was to get the graduates to understand what it takes to really succeed. "Go to those places where you're not comfortable. Never get warm and fuzzy. You see, the sleeping deer in the forest is the one that gets shot. You want to be the one that's always alert, always taking yourself to new places and rising to new heights," Mr. Bryan said.

All images taken by Cruselda Roberts for VI Consortium.

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