

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Boschulte Seizes Moment In Front Of 3,000 Journalists To Spotlight USVI As Top Caribbean Destination

Business / **Published On August 10, 2019 07:42 PM /**

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MIAMI, FLORIDA -- Department of Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte knew he had a short window -- exactly two minutes -- to promote the U.S. Virgin Islands in front of over 3,000 top African American journalists, among them influential movers and shakers, at the opening ceremony of the National Association of Black Journalists Convention in Miami, Florida on Wednesday. The room was also filled with lesser known but still impactful reporters and influencers that could help shape the narrative of the Virgin Islands in its most important market.

A seasoned tourism professional, Mr. Boschulte was well aware of his audience and knew he had to deliver a succinct talk loaded with the important details.

The tourism commissioner did not disappoint.

Mr. Boschulte hailed the U.S. Virgin Islands as being open for business. He mentioned the key pillars of a thriving destination: airlift, accommodations and cruise ships, and said while the territory is not where it was before the storms of 2017, it had rebounded



audiences on the mainland span tens of sounding applause.

Isaiah Thomas and Joseph Boschulte

(Marketplace Excellence)

N.A.B.J. celebrates the power of black influence, and Mr. Boschulte told the audience that the Virgin Islands has the only black governor in all of the U.S. He also emphasized that there's no passport requirement to come to the USVI as an American citizen ([58 percent of Americans don't hold a valid passport](#)). The commissioner highlighted the growth of the sharing economy in the Virgin Islands, making known that the territory [remains a trending Airbnb destination](#).

N.A.B.J. saw well over 4,000 participants this year. Sponsored in part by the U.S.V.I. Dept. of Tourism for nine years and counting, the weekend event serves as an indelible part of D.O.T.'s strategy to keep the territory at the forefront of the conversation. The territory's presence is not only seen on massive posters here, it is also spoken about by the founders of N.A.B.J.





















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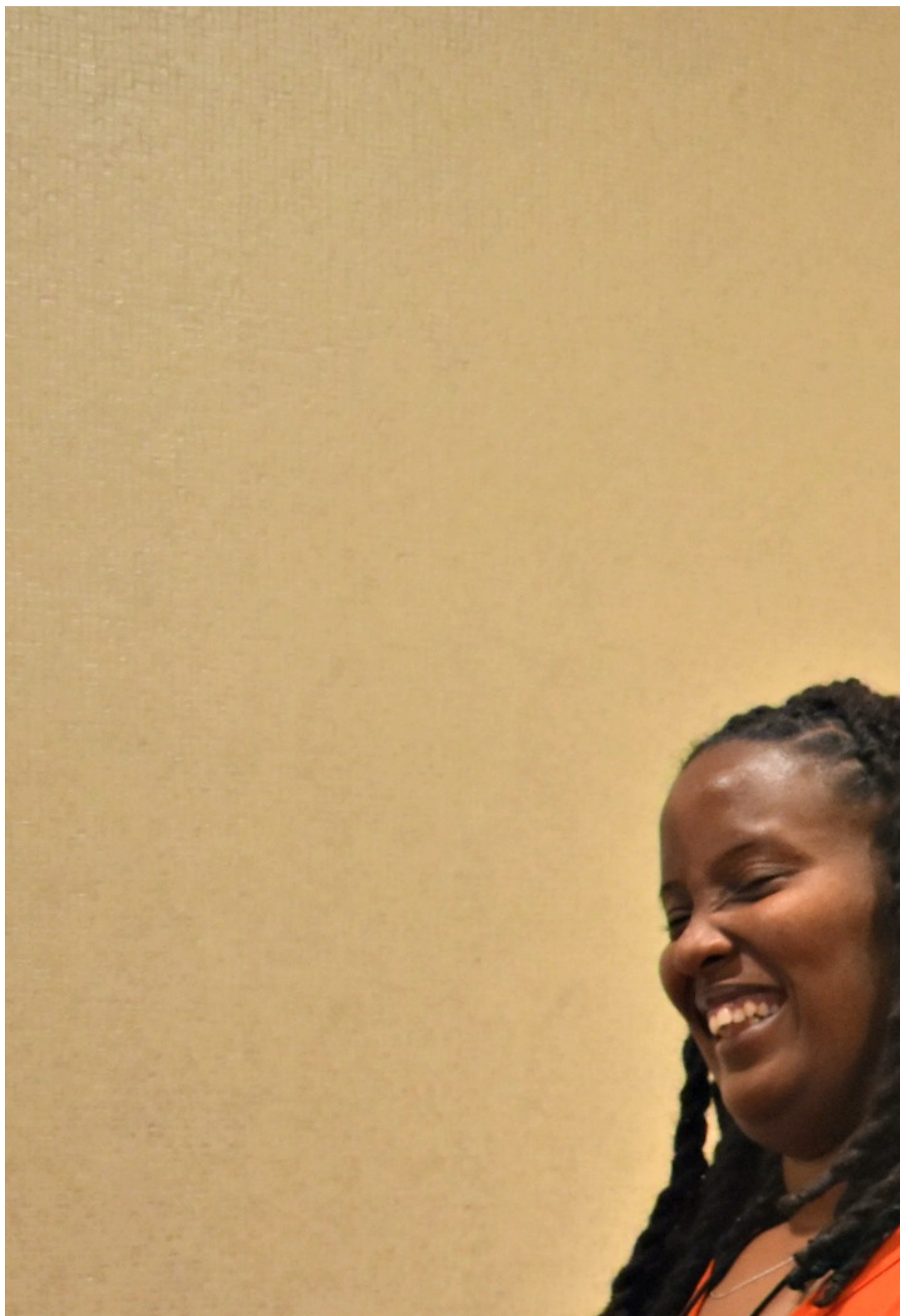
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Joseph Boschulte with Spectrum Band at N.A.B.J. 2019 (Marketplace Excellence)



Joseph Boschulte with D.O.T., Marketplace Excellence and and discussion panelists at
N.A.B.J. 2019 (VI Consortium)



Isaiah Thomas and Joseph Boschulte (Marketplace Excellence)

And the USVI culture comes into full display, too, with Moko Jumbies and cultural dancers captivating journalists and attendees who almost automatically want to learn more.

On Friday afternoon, D.O.T. held its own panel discussion to give journalists the opportunity to ask questions. There, too, Mr. Boschulte gave responses to reporters that spoke of the USVI's resilience following the devastating storms of 2017, and a territory that has made great strides in restoring its tourism product. He said though the U.S. Virgin Islands is open for business, the best is yet to come, speaking of the mainstay resorts such as The Ritz-Carlton on St. Thomas, which is set for an October reopening, and others such as the Marriott on St. Thomas and Divi Carina Bay on St. Croix -- two hotels still being repaired after being damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.



Joseph Boschulte with members of the D.O.T. and Marketplace Excellence teams, and discussion panelists at N.A.B.J. 2019 (VI Consortium)

At the panel discussion, titled "Building Bridges and Telling the Stories That Matter", journalists posed questions that emphasized the importance of building the many aspects of the Caribbean that makes it disparate -- and enviable -- to the rest of the world. From its unique cultures, cuisine, majority black ownership relative to businesses, and its people's multiple ancestral backgrounds. They also spoke of the essential value of distinguishing the islands to push back against the notion that once you visit one Caribbean island, you have visited all. To that end, Mr. Boschulte highlighted his strategy to promote each of the Virgin Islands destinations' unique qualities.

When discussing Caribbean cuisine, journalists expressed disappointment with the apparent lack of coordination between hotels and Caribbean governments on making local food part of the hotels' menus. Mr. Boschulte said relative to the U.S. Virgin Islands, the original tastes are usually experienced at food vans and local restaurants, which many tourists frequent.



Joseph Boschulte with Spectrum Band at N.A.B.J. 2019 (Marketplace Excellence)

Mr. Boschulte spoke of diversifying the territory's advertising portfolio to include new media -- the social platforms and other online methods -- whereby younger individuals, including millennials whose spending power is sought, can be reached.

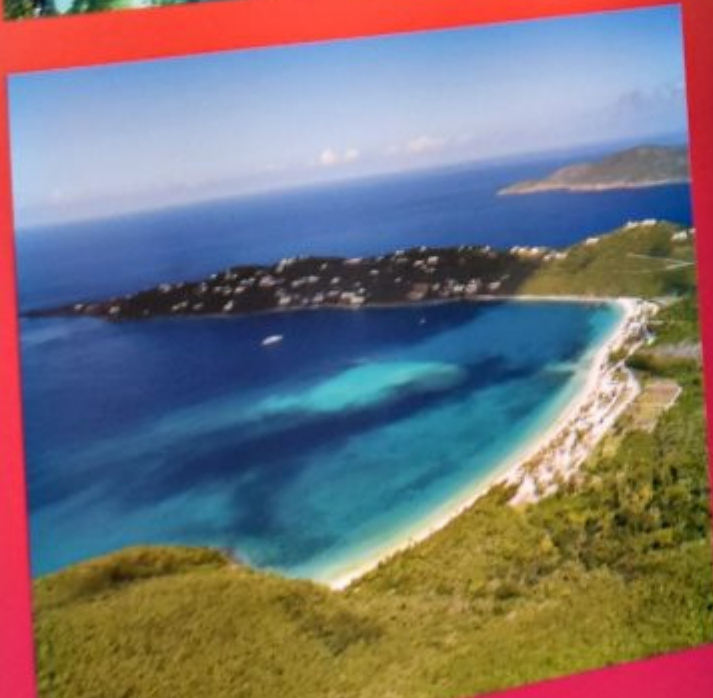
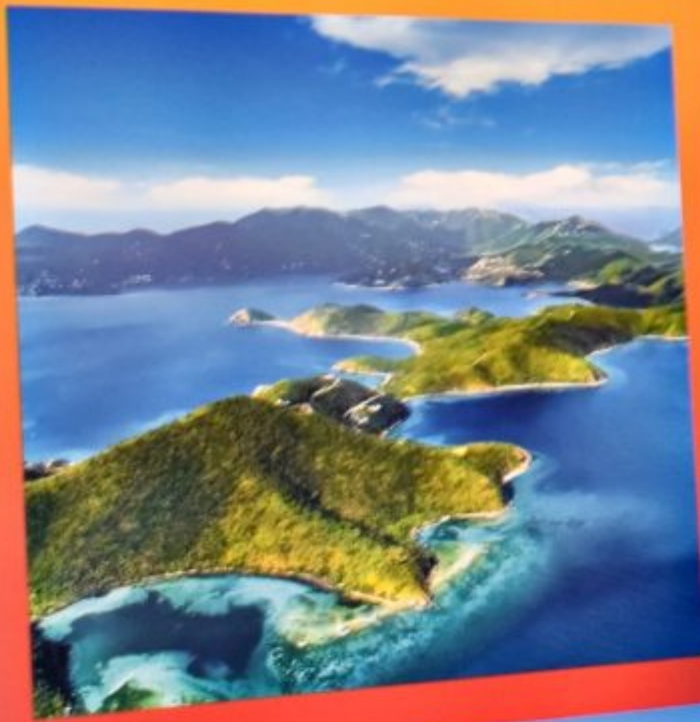
The journalists offered a number of suggestions, all with varying levels of significance. One journalist said the USVI was uniquely positioned to market itself as the melting pot of the Caribbean whose islands include the largest mix of Caribbean nationals.

Another journalist spoke of the importance of educating tourists on the impact of the Caribbean aside from its whimsical attractions such as beaches. Such discussions should include the significant individuals whose contributions to the modern world are ineradicable. An employee at the Simmons University in Boston, the journalist pitched an internship program that would see students from the states traveling to the USVI and other Caribbean destinations to learn about Caribbean history and culture, and vice versa.



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Peter Bailey with University of the Virgin Islands media/communications interns (VI Consortium)

Mr. Boschulte, who interacted with several of the journalists afterward -- taking business cards and exchanging ideas -- welcomed most of the suggestions that he said could eventually be realized, even if it takes time.

"I think networking is key. I think one of the things that fears many of us is the big steps, but we don't always have to take the big steps," Mr. Boschulte said, speaking directly to the Simmonds University employee. "It could be three students one year then six students the next year, then you get three or four universities in the Boston area exchanging with the USVI. We've got to be comfortable taking (the initial) step forward."

Continuing the ubiquitous presence of the USVI at N.A.B.J., on Saturday a showing of Peter Bailey's the Unbreakable Virgin Islanders, which tells the stories of Virgin Islanders following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, was held. At the showing were a number of journalists, including an NBC correspondent who covers the Caribbean and Caribbean-related news.



Prominent USVI marketing at N.A.B.J. 2019. D.O.T. Commissioner Joseph Boschulte addressed 3,000 of the U.S.'s top black journalists (Marketplace Excellence)

Mr. Boschulte saw value in showing the film at the convention as it ties in directly with the U.S. Virgin Islands' continuing recovery following the 2017 storms.

Also present at this year's convention was Senator Myron Jackson, who, along with N.A.B.J. Founding member, Paul H. Brock, has been advocating for legendary VI media man Addie Ottley, who Mr. Brock worked with in the Virgin Islands years ago, to be chosen as the N.A.B.J. 2020 journalist of the year.

As with last year, Spectrum Band out of St. Thomas was chosen as the event's house band, wowing crowds with a wide array of genres.

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