

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Shamari Haynes Relinquishes Role At Simply Sophisticated And Savage Festival Troupes; Organization's New Lead Is Wendy Aurelien

Entertainment / **Published On August 24, 2019 01:30 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **August 24, 2019**



ST. CROIX -- Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe, the territory's largest carnival troupe and Savage Festival -- both created by trailblazer millennial Shamari Haynes -- will now be led by Wendy Aurelien, the organization's executive committee lead, as Mr. Haynes relinquishes his role to focus on his new job at the Department of Tourism.

That's according to Mr. Haynes himself, who recently told the Consortium that it was a necessary decision to allay concerns of conflict of interest, as he will be intimately involved in the planning of this year's Crucian Christmas Festival.

"This is to avoid conflict of interest concerns since my appointment to the Department of Tourism and my tasked duties of working with the Division of Festivals for the St. Croix Crucian Christmas Festival 2019/2020," Mr. Haynes said.

Yet even as he focuses on the C.C.C., Mr. Haynes will still play an important role in the troupes' success. "Moving forward, this only means that I will be disconnecting in some aspects but will still provide consultation and support to the committee to ensure that things are ran same as they have in the past, and to ensure that the quality and good customer service remains," he said.

Importantly, Mr. Haynes made known, while both troupes will participate in this year's Adults Parade, "they will not qualify for any winner or runner-up prizes." He stressed that members who already registered to be part of the troupes should rest assured that there will be no disruption in preparation for the season, and that Ms. Aurelien, who has been part of the organization for 9 years, is well capable to lead a successful 2019-2020 season.

"Wendy Aurelien has worked closely with the SimplySAVAGE brand for 9 years. Since her inception in Simply Sophisticated Fun Troupe, she has played a major role in the decision-making and branding, and has taken on the responsibilities of participant enrollment and registration, Mas Camp operation and overall production and execution of both troupes, Simply Sophisticated and SAVAGE Festival," Mr. Haynes said. Those with concerns should call 340-626-6200.

Relative to his new role at D.O.T., Mr. Haynes said, "Personally, I feel that I bring forth expertise, experience, knowledge and definitely vision to the Crucian Christmas Festival. I have worked within various aspects of festival throughout the past and my passion for Virgin Islands culture and tradition is definitely evident."

He added, "As for Simply Sophisticated and SAVAGE Festival, we have definitely introduced a new level of customer service over the years and have most certainly raised the bar when it comes to the Adults Parade, while creating and influencing a platform for other millennials interested in starting their own carnival troupes or brands."

Simply Sophisticated, Mr. Haynes said, started with just 28 members. Overtime, however, it has grown into the largest troupe in all of the U.S. Virgin Islands with over 628 members. Along with Savage Festival's 75 members, Mr. Haynes's influence in the islands' festival is unmistakable.

This year, however, the team decided to cut back on enrollment to preserve quality.

Mr. Haynes said residents and visitors should expect a proper season with some new events and the revival of some old ones. He also thanked Governor Albert Bryan and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach for the opportunity to help shape the island's festival in his capacity at D.O.T.

"We're looking forward to a smooth and successful season," he concluded.

Feature Image: Wendy Aurelien and Shamari Haynes, courtesy Reemy-Reemz Photography.

