

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Community Mourns V.I. Calypso Icon St. Clair Alphonso 'Whadablee' DeSilvia

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St. Clair Alphonso “Whadablee” DeSilvia,

The V.I. community — from public officials to regular citizens — along with family and friends mourned the death of St. Clair Alphonso “Whadablee” DeSilvia, a calypso icon in the U.S. Virgin Islands who died Saturday.

From social media platforms, particularly Facebook, to the airwaves, the legendary figure was remembered for his transformative impact on Virgin Islands music. He died at age 63.

"The significance of this startling loss is immeasurable," said Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory. "He contributed to the public through his contribution to the Legislature and his contribution to the musical landscape of this territory. Indeed, with heavy hearts, we send condolences to the DeSilvia family, his friends and all of those who were able to experience his gifts."

"The Virgin Islands will certainly be at a loss, personally and culturally," she added.

DeSilvia, who worked for the Legislature until his retirement in December 2020, was a self-taught musician who learned to play the ukulele as a youth and played with the steel band West Stars. He then started singing with Dred Ones in high school. He played percussion with Mandingo Brass during those years and later became the lead singer. Many Virgin Islanders are familiar with his songs, including "Off Man Jam," "Traffic Tight" and "One for Milo," among others. Crowned five times as Calypso Monarch, DeSilvia also won the title of King of Kings by his peers.

DeSilvia was featured on WTJX's "No Strings Attached" in Nov. 2019, where he was asked about his stage name Whadablee. "It derived from the name Antigua. I was born in Antigua [and] they call Antigua Whadablee with a "D", so I just changed the D, and put a B in there, and called myself Whadablee so people could associate me with Antigua," he said.

DeSilvia described himself as being "plain, simple, down-to-earth."

"When I was young I was a little more wild... not crazy wild but a little more wild. Now I've simmered down a bit and I'm enjoying my golden ages," he said.

Regarding how he got into music, DeSilvia recalled his mother telling him that one day he went to church during the Christmas season and the song O Come All Ye Faithful was being sung. Then suddenly, during a high point of the song — though he didn't know the words — he joined in and sang "de, de de de, de," DeSilvia said as he and the host of the interview laughed.

"My mom was a good singer and I used to hear her singing these church songs all the time, so it sticks in my mind. So that's where I believe I began singing first," DeSilvia said, pointing out that his family members were Seventh Day Adventists and Calypso was forbidden, but he would lock himself in a room and listen to the calypsonians of the day, including the Mighty Sparrow. See the full WTJX interview [here](#).