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Virgin Islanders Beam With Pride as Basketball Superstar Aliyah Boston is Honored With Billboard at Airport, Parade Through Charlotte Amalie

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Ernice Gilbert **June 05, 2022**

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Virgin Islanders celebrated Aliyah Boston during a parade held in her honor on Sat. June 4, 2022 in downtown Charlotte Amalie. By. ERNICE GILBERT/ V.I. CONSORTIUM

The government of the Virgin Islands pulled out all stops on Saturday as it treated one of its very own — St. Thomas native and basketball superstar Aliyah Boston — as royalty.

Through a combined effort that included Government House, the Dept. of Sports, Parks and Recreation, the V.I. Dept. of Tourism and the V.I. Port Authority, a large billboard was installed at the entrance of the Cyril E. King Airport bearing Aliyah's name and likeness that welcomes guests coming in and thanks those leaving the island for visiting. Then, the roadway of downtown

Charlotte Amalie was closed to accommodate a parade in her honor, with hundreds of Virgin Islanders lining the streets to wave and cheer as Aliyah waved and smiled in return, sitting on a convertible Nissan Z.

The events culminated with a ceremony at the picturesque waterfront promenade just east of the District Court building, with guest speakers ranging from Governor Albert Bryan to Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, and special remarks from the honoree herself, Aliyah.

At every opportunity to speak, leaders praised Aliyah for her long list of accomplishments at the young age of 20. They also lauded her parents for raising Aliyah and her sister Alexis Boston into respectable humans with humility.



Aliyah Boston takes a selfie following the unveiling of a billboard bearing her name and likeness at the Cyril E. King Airport on Sat. June 4, 2022. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VI Consortium)

Several groups paraded downtown Charlotte Amalie as part of the celebration. They included majorettes, moko jumbies, softball teams, deejays, and a convoy of vehicles that included the governor's and lieutenant governor's.

Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, who knows the Boston family personally, shared stories that sought to paint a picture of the dedication of Aliyah's parents and others that resulted in the person she is today. Aliyah became emotional to the point of tears when Ms. Frett-Gregory spoke of a deceased individual who was instrumental throughout her life, Aliyah's Godfather Mac Davis.

"I know you've heard it all, you are extraordinary. Your achievements both on and off the court make us proud to call you our own and proud to call you a U.S. Virgin Islander. Aliyah, you're a big deal," the Senate president said.

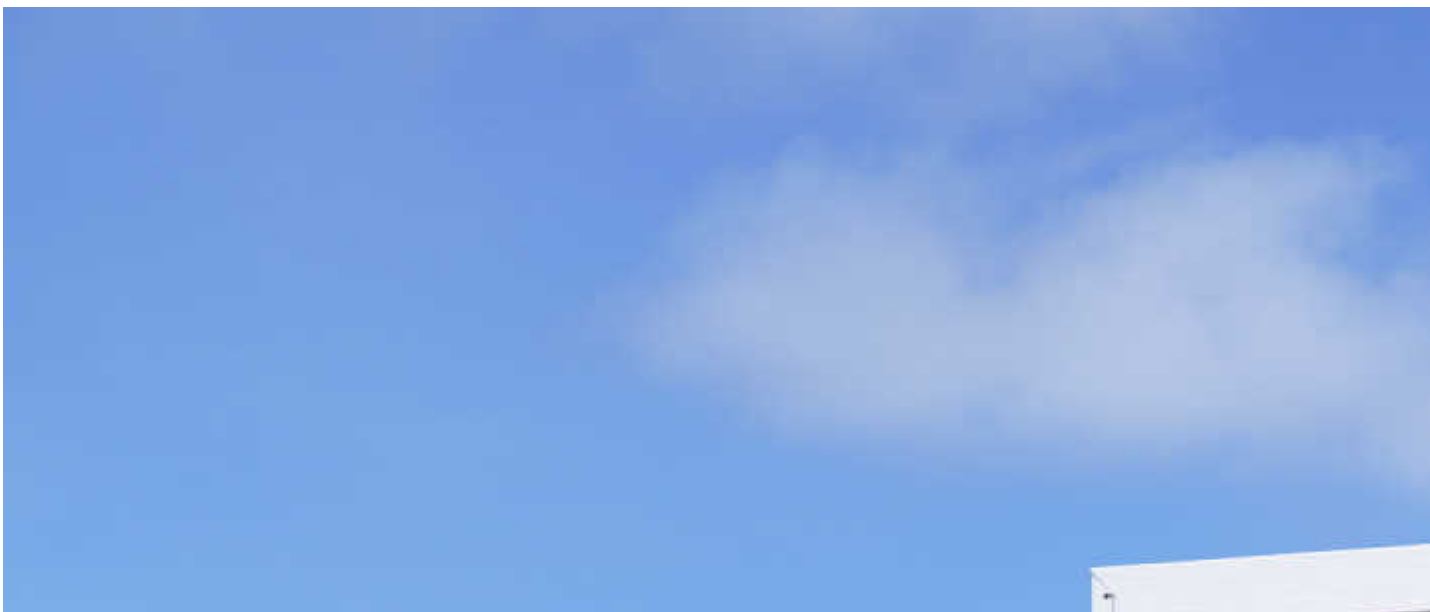
"Thank you Aliyah for what you've done in 20 years," said Governor Bryan at the ceremony, adding jokingly, "for making me feel like a loser because I have 50 [years]." The governor asked the parents of Aliyah, Algernon and Cleone Boston, to stand as he honored them for the manner in which the daughters were raised. He and Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach also presented Aliyah with a plaque of the official declaration naming June 4 Aliyah Boston Day.

Stepping to the lectern, Aliyah used her speech to thank those who made Saturday's events possible as well as the wider Virgin Islands community for their support, which she said was strong during the recent games in both the conference and national finals. She also used her speech to speak on things dear to her heart related to sports, education and the youth.

"Parents, it truly starts with you," Aliyah said. "My parents would never miss a game, they would support my sister and I no matter what." She said her parents sold raffle tickets, had soup sales, and even started GoFundMe accounts to facilitate their travel camps. "They always tried to find a way with God's help for us to accomplish our goals," she said. "When your kids tell you that they have a goal or a dream, believe them and encourage them."

She said her father would work extra shifts at a second job and never complained. "To mom and dad, thank you for always trusting God and believing in us so much."

Aliyah encouraged the youth to continue pushing toward their goals and to surround themselves with good company. "Remember you are known by the company you keep, and remember equally important, iron sharpens iron: choose your friends wisely and surround yourself with people that will want to see you be great," she said.



From left to right: Aliyah's Dad Algernon Boston, Dept. of Sports, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Calvert White, Governor Albert Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach, Aliyah Boston, Senate President Donna Frett-Gregory, Aliyah's sister Alexis Boston, Aliyah's mom Cleone Boston, and Aliyah's grandmother. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VI Consortium)

Aliyah thanked the government for the sporting programs that allowed her to play basketball at a young age. She also noted the refurbishing of sporting facilities but added that a lot more was needed.

"Having feeder systems that enable children to support and learn from the early ages, from even [age] three can help them with the fundamentals of what they want to do," Aliyah said, giving an example of improvements needed to strengthen the opportunities for local youth.

She further stated, "I think we should also establish programs that encourage children to work hard in school and work hard in developing their craft so that schools on the mainland could provide financial aid support, where student athletes can go to school on the mainland, get exposure and get the opportunity to go to a Division 1 college."

Aliyah has a strong foundation built on faith, and she encouraged young people to "please take a leap of faith and believe that God will provide you with whatever you need no matter what." She added, "My mom always told us a saying that she stole from someone else, 'God doesn't give us a dream to match our budget, he gives us a dream to match our faith.'"

Aside from winning the NCAA national title in women's college basketball with her South Carolina Gamecocks teammates [in April](#), Aliyah has a very long list of accomplishments, most of which can be read [here](#).