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# Creating History for VI Women: Two St. Croix Sisters Receive Doctoral Hoods on Same Day

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## **Simmonds Sisters and their family.**

Two St. Croix sisters made their family proud last week by receiving their doctoral hoods for Capella University's School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Phd Program, being declared doctors in philosophy on the same day.

A media release informed that Dr. Xaulanda Simmonds-Emmanuel and Dr. Khnuma Simmonds, daughters of artist El'Roy Simmonds and educator/children's advocate Carmen Simmonds participated in the hooding ceremony on Saturday, March 4th, 2023 in Charlotte, North Carolina, making V.I. History in the process.

Sixteen years separate the two sisters, but they do share one common message — education, women’s empowerment, black excellence and V.I. Pride, according to the release.

That message is a timely one, coinciding as it does with Women’s History Month and V.I. History Month. The Simmonds sisters' achievements now place them in the approximately 2% of the U.S. population [that has a Ph.D](#); and the 60% of the Black women who [make up this percentage](#).

A [recent article](#) by Ms. Xaulanda delves into the stories of other women PhD holders in the Virgin Islands and beyond, who share their ‘why’ behind their pursuit of doctoral degrees. Much like them, the Simmonds sisters have undergone this rigorous academic journey - not merely for career advancement or pay increases (although they won’t reject it should it come, they say) but to document the experiences of Black voices through research and personal reasons of family, faith, community and building legacy for generations to come.

Ms. Simmonds-Emmanuel, chief passion officer of The XauSky Group and co-owner of My Girlfriend’s Closet St. Thomas, received a doctor of philosophy in psychology. Her dissertation was titled ‘Predicting Work Passion: A Multiple Regression Analysis’, and involved healthcare middle managers that self-identify as people of color.

Ms. Simmonds, the founder and CEO of Girlfriendism International LLC/My Girlfriend’s Closet St. Croix, is a doctor of philosophy in advanced studies in human behavior. She published her research entitled ‘Caribbean Women, Music & Dance: Self-Expression and Intimate Partner Violence Recovery’ involving survivors in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to the press release, in addition to their peer-reviewed published research and cover features in local publications like EmpowHER Magazine and national publications like Voyage Minnesota and Disruptors Magazine, the Simmonds Sisters are also pleased to serve as co-authors for the newest V.I. anthology book launch - "Passion and Purpose" by Courageous Woman Magazine.

This anthology, which features 21 women to watch from the U.S. Virgin Islands — including the Simmonds sisters — who share their stories of entrepreneurship, leadership and everyday life. It will be available for purchase and download on Amazon on March 22.

The newly-minted, real life sorors express much gratitude to ‘the village’ that raised them, and ‘the girlfriends’ who continue to support them.