

Page 1 of 5



UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
LITERARY
FESTIVAL
BOOK FAIR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Alsess Lewis-Brown, Chair of the VI Lit Fest Program

Tel: 340-692- 4152 abrown@uvi.edu

www.usvilitfest.com

<https://www.facebook.com/VILitFest>

VIRGIN ISLANDS LITERARY FESTIVAL & BOOK FAIR 2019

ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Plans are in full swing for the 5th Virgin Islands Literary Festival and Book Fair scheduled for April 10 through 13, 2019 on the island of St. Croix. Main events will be held on the Albert Sheen Campus of the University of the Virgin Islands.

“We live in an age that encourages deep contemplation especially for those of us who muse about these unsettling times. There are many metaphors that we can draw on as we seek answers. In the world and by extension, the Caribbean region, changes and demand for such is always somewhere on a horizon. Time does not wait for any of this to cycle out. So, we continue to evolve. As we become what we are becoming, it often appears to be devolution. This is why reading and writing matters. These precious acts help us to articulate and situate circumstances, ideas, and issues especially when we open ourselves readers and writers from outside of our own little nest. The works of our guest authors reflect those ideas expressed in this year’s central theme: **“Musings and Metaphors: Revolution, Evolution and Devolution (READ)”**”

In addition to Virgin Islands authors, authors from the wider Caribbean and the United States, our array of award winning authors come from as far away as Australia, South Africa and Norway. As in the past, the VI Lit Fest is a toast to ideas and a celebration of the imagination through literature, panel discussions and workshops on writing and publishing.”

This year we will also host a Children’s Corner, which will be operated by the Children’s Museum of St. Croix. The Aunty Janice Children’s Corner is dedicated to Folklorist, storyteller, Culture Bearer Janice Tutein, “Aunty Janice” who recently departed this earth was always the life of our Children’s Corner and so we celebrate her memory by naming our corner in her honor.

While main events will be held at UVI, there will also be several other venues including the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts on the waterfront in Frederiksted, Government House in Frederiksted and Undercover Bookstore in Christiansted

The idea for establishing an annual Literary Festival and Book Fair is credited to Dr. Simon Jones-Hendrickson, former Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) of UVI. The first Program Chair was UVI Professor Dr. Valerie Knowles Combie. The 2019, program chair for the fourth year in succession is Alscess Lewis-Brown, UVI adjunct Professor and Editor of *The Caribbean Writer*.

WHO'S COMING TO THE FESTIVAL?

Deng Thiak Adut, our keynote speaker, is a defence lawyer and refugee advocate in Western Sydney, Australia, and a former child soldier from South Sudan. His story is told in a popular short video by Western Sydney University, where he earned his law degree. He was named the 2017 New South Wales Australian Man of the Year. A member of the Dinka people, Adut was born near Malek, a small fishing village in South Sudan near White Nile River. One of eight children, he had a happy early childhood spent with his family at their banana farm. In 1987, at the age of 6 or 7 years, Adut was taken from his mother and marched for 33 days to Ethiopia along with 30 other child conscripts and forced to fight for the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the Second Sudanese Civil War. In 1995, Adut's older half-brother, John Mac, smuggled Adut out of Sudan at night in a truck under sacks of corn. Adut spent 18 months in a refugee camp in Kenya. The United Nations granted both brothers refugee status and, in 1998 when Adut was 14, Australia granted both boys a visa.

Yona Deshommes is responsible for coordinating publicity for Strebor Books (Atria's African-American literature line) and Infinite Words, a sub-imprint of Strebor Books. She is also the in-house publicity liaison for Cash Money Content. She has worked with a myriad of authors that include New York Times bestselling authors Common (One Day It'll All Make Sense), TD Jakes (Let It Go), Zane (Addicted), Wil Haygood (The Butler), and Janet Mock (Redefining Realness). Her current and upcoming projects include *Brothas Be Like, Yo, George, Ain't That Funkin' Kind of Hard on You?* by George Clinton; *Citizens Creek* by Lalita Tademy; *Misadventures of an Awkward Black Girl* by Issa Rae; *Infinite Words* by Zane; and *I Am Charlie Wilson* by Charlie Wilson.

Denene Milner is a New York Times best-selling author and award-winning journalist whose insightful and captivating pieces have secured her foothold in the entertainment, parenting, social media and book publishing industries. The former Parenting magazine columnist has penned 29 books, including *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*, co-written with Steve Harvey, *Around the Way Girl*, a memoir with actress Taraji P. Henson and *The Vow*, the novel on which the hit Lifetime movie, "With This Ring," was based. Her latest offering, "The Fresh Princess," which she penned with Will Smith, who inspired the story, debuts in April 2019. Denene also is the editor of Denene Millner Books, a new imprint that publishes books featuring African American children and families, in partnership with Simon & Schuster. In her debut year, "Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut," won Newbery and Caldecott honors and the Kirkus Prize for Children's Literature.

Denene also is the founder of MyBrownBaby.com, a critically acclaimed blog that examines the intersection of parenting and race. Her celebrated opinion writing led to her being chosen as a co-host of Georgia Public Broadcasting's "A Seat at the Table," a talk show that trains its lens on topics from a distinctly black women's perspective. Millner has contributed to *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Redbook* and *Family Circle*; her extensive broadcast experience includes appearances on *The Today Show*, *The Meredith Vieira Show*, *HLN* and *NPR*. The former political reporter and entertainment journalist lives in Atlanta with her two daughters.

Richard Georges is a writer, editor, and lecturer in the British Virgin Islands. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Prelude*, *Smartish Pace*, *Barrelhouse*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *The Puritan*, *The Poetry Review*, *WILDNESS*, *Wasafiri*, *decomp*, *The Rusty Toque*, *Baldhip*, *Susumba*, *Under the Radar*, *sx salon*, *those that this*, *Reservoir*, *L'Ephemere Review*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and elsewhere. Georges is the author of the poetry collections *Make Us All Islands* (Shearsman Books) and *GIANT* (Platypus Press). He is the recipient of the 2016 Marvin E. Williams Literary Prize from *The Caribbean Writer*, and has been shortlisted for The Wasafiri New Writing Prize, The Small Axe Literary Prize, The Hollick Arvon Prize for Caribbean Literature, and the Forward Prize for Best First Collection. His third collection of poems, *Epiphaneia*, is forthcoming in 2019 from Outspoken Press. He holds a BA in English from Texas Christian University, an MA in Creative Writing from Aberystwyth University, and a PhD in Critical and Creative Writing from the University of Sussex. He works at H. Lavity Stoutt Community College and is also a founding editor of *Moko*, a journal of Caribbean arts and letters. He is currently at work on a novel and an essay collection.

Fartein Hogar is an award winning Norwegian author. Who has written both fiction and non fiction books as well as poetry. His latest book is the result of significant research on the Virgin Islands during the Danish occupation. He is a professor at the University of Norway.

Lewis Gordon is also Honorary President and Core Professor at the Global Center for Advanced Studies; Honorary Professor at the Unit of the Humanities at Rhodes University (UHURU), South Africa and a musician who regularly performs in blues, jazz, reggae, and rock bands. He has lectured across the globe. His books include *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* (Humanities Press, 1995), *Her Majesty's Other Children* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), *Existencia Africana* (Routledge, 2000), *Disciplinary Decadence* (Routledge, 2006), *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge UP, 2008) and, more recently, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought* (NY: Fordham UP; London: Hurst; Johannesburg: Wits UP, 2015; in Swedish, *Vad Fanon Sa*, Stockholm: TankeKraft förlag, 2016), *La sud prin nord-vest: Reflectii existențiale afrodiasporice*, trans. Ovidiu Tichindeleanu (Cluj, Romania: IDEA Design & Print, 2016), and, with Fernanda Frizzo Bragato, *Geopolitics and Decolonization: Perspectives from the Global South* (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018). Interested persons can connect with him at <https://www.facebook.com/LewisGordonPhilosopher> and <https://twitter.com/lewgord>.

Paget Henry, author and Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies at Brown University, will also be at the festival to present on *Properly Documenting Sources and Building Credibility*. His specializations are in Dependency Theory, Caribbean Political Economy, Sociology of Religion, Sociology of Art and Literature, Africana Philosophy and Religion, Race and Ethnic Relations, Poststructuralist, and Critical Theory. He has served on the faculties of S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook, University of the West Indies (Antigua) and the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (Routledge, 2000), *Peripheral Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Antigua* (Transaction Books, 1985), and co-editor of *C.L.R. James's Caribbean* (Duke UP, 1992) and *New Caribbean: Decolonization, Democracy, and Development* (Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1983). His more than fifty articles, essays, and reviews have appeared in such journals, newspapers, and magazines as *Caribbean Quarterly*, *Social and Economic Studies*, *The Cornell Journal of Social Relations*, *The Encyclopaedia of the Left*, *Sociological Forum*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, the *Antigua and Barbuda Forum*, *Third World Affairs*, *The Bulletin of Eastern Caribbean Affairs*, and *Blackworld*. Several of Henry's essays have been reprinted in anthologies on the best work in his fields. Henry is editor of *The C.L.R. James Journal* and co-editor of the Routledge series *Africana Thought*.

Jamaica Kincaid is an award-winning Antiguan-American novelist, essayist, gardener, and gardening writer. She resides in Vermont and teaches at Harvard University as the "Professor of African and African American Studies in Residence."

Rozena Maart is a professor, author, Director for the Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. She has been recognized for her writing, and for her work opposing apartheid and violence against women. She has lectured throughout Canada, the United States and many parts of the world. She was born in District Six, Cape Town, South Africa, the old slave quarter of Cape Town. Her family was forcibly removed from District Six in 1973 as a result of the government's Forced Removal Act. In 1987 when she was 24, Maart was nominated for the "Woman of the Year" award hosted in Johannesburg, for her work opposing violence against women and for starting, with four women, the first Black feminist organization in Cape Town, Women Against Repression (WAR). She moved to Canada in 1989 and published her first book of poetry in 1990, *Talk About It!*. She won the Journey Prize in 1992 for her short story "No Rosa, No District Six", which later appeared in her debut short story collection "Rosa's District Six." She is the author of several books of poetry, short fiction, non-fiction and novels, most recently the novel *The Writing Circle*, published in 2007 (TSAR Publications), which is being made into a feature film. *Rosa's District Six* made the weekly bestseller list in Canada in 2006 and the HOMEBRU 2006 list in South Africa..

Cadwell Turnbull's fiction can be found in the pages of *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Lightspeed*, and *Nightmare*. His *Nightmare* story "*Loneliness is in Your Blood*" was selected for The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy 2018. He received an MFA in Creative Writing and an MA in Linguistics at North Carolina State University and attended the Clarion West 2016. His debut

novel, *The Lesson*, set in near-future U.S. Virgin Islands after an alien colonization, is forthcoming from Blackstone Publishing. Turnbull grew up on St. Thomas and teaches ESL to adults in Charlestown, MA.

Hanétha Vété-Congolo-Leibnitz is a Martinican and scholar of Caribbean and African literatures and cultures. She teaches at Bowdoin College in Maine where she lives. Her poetry has appeared in journals such as *MaComère*, *Riveneuve Continent*, *Wadabagei*, *A Journal of the Caribbean Diaspora*, or *AfroEuropa : Journal of AfroEuropean Studies*.

Tiphonie Yanique is a Virgin Islands-born author who has garnered wide acclaim for her new novel, *Land of Love and Drowning*, Yanique is the author of the poetry collection, *Wife*, which won the 2016 Bocas Prize in Caribbean poetry and the United Kingdom's 2016 Forward/Felix. She is also the author of *How to Escape from a Leper Colony*. She is the winner of a Pushcart Prize, the Kore Press Fiction Prize, The Academy of American Poets Prize, and a Fulbright Scholarship in writing and the Boston Review Fiction Prize. She is also the winner of the 2010 Rona Jaffe Prize in Fiction. Her fiction, poetry or essays can be found in the *Best African American Fiction*, *Transition Magazine*, *American Short Fiction*, *The London Magazine*, *Prism International*, *Callaloo*, and other journals and anthologies. She has had residencies with *Bread Loaf*, *Callaloo*, *Squaw Valley* and the Cropper Foundation for Caribbean Writers. She is a member of The Caribbean Writer's editorial advisory board. Yanique is a professor of Creative Writing and Caribbean Literature at Drew University.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE FESTIVAL?

On Wednesday, the School Writers' Rendezvous moves off into the schools where students get to meet with and learn from distinguished writers firsthand. It is a journey into St. Croix schools, sponsored by the Virgin Islands Department of Education's Division of Cultural Education and Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Thursday evening formal reception will be held at Government house in the town of Frederiksted.

A grand lot of books will be available for purchase at festive Book Bacchanal in cooperation with the Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts on Friday evening. Authors will not only read from their works but local poets both amateur and professional are invited to participate in the open mic poetry session.

On Saturday morning, the now-famous **Bush Tea Morning Social** will open bright and early with music, live performances and a good old-fashioned Caribbean breakfast. At 9:15, Author and Professor Clement White, a Virgin Islander who teaches at the University of Rhode Island will address the gathering. Following his address,

Come prepared to spend the day and stay for a **Brown Bag Lunch** and a presentation by “ on bPublishing, by Yona Deshomme of Atria Books.

In the afternoon, the workshops are tuned to developing writers and readers . Other authors, discussants and presenters will be featured at this two-day event. Visit our website at www.usvilitfest.com for more information.

VILF: A Unifying Event

It is our hope that each year, the VI Lit Fest will probe new ideas, offer new opportunities for writers to hone their craft and become one of the most unifying cultural events within the Virgin Islands, the region and the world. Besides offering a space for purchasing books and promoting critical thinking in our exchange of points of view with authors, we hope that the festival will become a place for exhibiting the intellectual and spiritual dynamism of the cultural life in the Virgin Islands. If you wish to join our School Writers' Rendezvous or launch your new book, contact us at usvilitfest@gmail.com.

Tickets

Full admission to the fair is \$150, (excluding Zane and Kincaid workshops) including the opening reception and Meet and Greet with the writers at the Book Bacchanal and reception in Frederiksted, and admission to all workshops and presentations. Day passes or single workshop passes are also available. Discounted fares are offered to teachers and senior citizens. Students are free. Tickets can be purchased online at www.usvilitfest.com

Sponsorships

This event would not be possible without the support of a number of partners. They include The Buccaneer, US Virgin Islands Department of Tourism, The University of the Virgin Islands' College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, The Virgin Islands Department of Education Divisions of Cultural Education as well as Curriculum and Instruction, Caravelle Hotel and Casino, UVI's Cooperative Extension Service, The Virgin Islands Daily News, University Bound Program, UVI Research and Technology Park, Virgin Islands Caribbean Cultural Center (VICCC), St. Croix Foundation, Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts, *The Caribbean Writer* and the newly formed Virgin Islands Writing Society.