



dateline: UVI

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UVI Class of 2010 Told to 'Take the Baton'

Activist, author and law professor Randall Robinson told the UVI class of 2010 that they must be the ones to shape their histories,



Left: Cadet Roger Simon of the UVI ROTC is commissioned as a second lieutenant at the St. Croix campus commencement ceremony. Right: On the St. Thomas campus Racquel Benjamin receives her degree. Bottom: Randall Robinson delivers the keynote address.



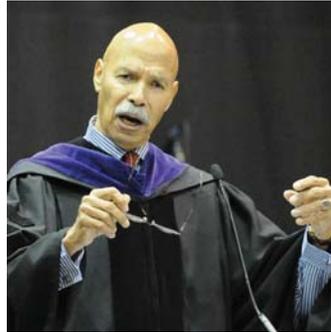
and do critical thinking for ourselves?"

Haitians, he said are rarely given due credit. Lead by Toussaint L'Ouverture, Haitians executed the first and

tell their stories and continue the work of his generation. Robinson was the keynote speaker at the St. Thomas and St. Croix commencement ceremonies, held on May 15 and 16, respectively. UVI conferred 312 degrees at the ceremonies.

UVI graduates are ahead of where he was at their age, he said. As a college student with an undecided major on a basketball scholarship, when Robinson was asked by a professor what he wanted to be Robinson replied "a doctor." That was until he was told to dissect a cat – a task he refused. "There is a big distinction between what you want to be and what you want to do," Robinson said. "We don't need be-ers, we need do-ers," he added. "You have to decide what you want to do."

"If you want to be great, you must feel that you stand on a tradition of greatness," Robinson said, noting that the greatness of Africans has not adequately been depicted. Robinson said that he was never taught about the great city of Timbuktu in Mali, West Africa or the history of Sheba, the vast land of which the Queen of Sheba is often referenced – yet he knew about the Eifel Tower. "Who is it that gives you the information that you consume," he asked. "Who keeps us in the box that we cannot escape



only successful slave revolt in the world to result in the first nation ruled by former slaves. "They began the emancipation process that led to freedom across the Americas," Robinson said. "It is safe to say that we would not be sitting here if not for the Haitians."

Robinson charged the graduates to build upon the foundation that has already been laid. "This business is a relay race. We hand the baton from one generation to the next. Tonight we hand the baton to you. Take it. Run with it. You are the hope of the world."

Officiating over his first UVI commencement, President David Hall thanked the graduates for helping to shape his understanding of UVI students. "In the life of the University, this is our most cherished day," he said.

Jaedee Caines was the class speaker on the St. Thomas campus. In a spirited speech she told her classmates that they must encourage others to obtain an education. "Know that we have reached a significant milestone in our lives, but our journey is not over," she said. Caines recognized the male graduates of the class, non-traditional students and mothers who juggled work, caring for a family and taking courses.

Carmie Thompson, the St. Croix campus class speaker, told her class to do their best at all times. "If, after leaving UVI as a graduate, you plan to continue in your present profession, do it with all your might because we are only limited by our own actions and no one else," she said. "It is not what you do, but how well you do it. Never get tired of doing what is right because it is in those moments that you define your life."

Events Calendar

May 31	Summer Institute World Forum	STT
May 31	UVI Closed - Memorial Day	
June 3	VI SBDC Awards Ceremony	STX
June 4	VI SBDC Awards Ceremony	STT

Managing Disasters First-Hand

Four months after the devastating Jan. 12 earthquake rattled Haiti, flattening buildings and killing thousands of people, the memories are still hard to discuss. Seven students participating in UVI's Summer Institute for Future Global Leaders fought back emotions to share their experiences of surviving the earthquake that killed an estimated 300,000 people and left more than one million homeless.

"Like a nightmare, I saw buildings collapsing, people covered in dust. I saw people dying," said Aravena St. Dic. "There were dead bodies everywhere – a leg here, and an arm there and fresh blood everywhere."

Gerlande Joaseus was at work when she felt the earthquake. "I started to pray to ask God to forgive me for all I did wrong," Joaseus said. When the shaking stopped, Joaseus found her mother's house flattened and her mother missing. Onlookers said that her mother was probably dead, and told her to leave. She didn't. The next day Joaseus heard her mother singing. She was alive. "Life is very important. I thank God for that," said Joaseus, who still lives in a tent. She now has a new vision for life, she said.

Getrop Demero still has not heard from some of his family. While there is a possibility that some did not survive the earthquake, there is also the possibility that some were rescued and taken from Haiti, said Demero, the administrative director of the National Police of Haiti.

The memories are still too painful for Pierre Gary. "I saw many brothers and sisters die. I cannot speak about it," he said after briefly sharing his story.

All of the students said that they helped as much as they could in the aftermath. "It was an opportunity for me to feed, in my house, more than 20 people," Demero said. "It was also an opportunity for me to see how the Haitian people are hopeful."

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Joyner Jumbie Jubilee



National Radio Personality Tom Joyner, center, is greeted by 'mocko jumbies' UVI alumnus Rick Grant, left, and UVI Professor Dr. David Smith, right, after Joyner's Fantastic Voyage cruise docked on St. Thomas on May 20. The Fantastic Voyage raises money for the Tom Joyner Foundation, which supports Historically Black Colleges and Universities. UVI has received support from the foundation.

Sabine Nicolas is developing a pre and post-disaster plan for the nation. "We are resilient. We are strong. And we firmly believe that Haiti will not die," Nicolas said. "Haiti pap peri (Haiti will not die)."

The theme for this year's institute is "Managing Natural Disasters: A Call for Future Global Leaders." The public is invited to the institute's World Forum Debate, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Monday, May 31, at the UVI Administration and Conference Center. They will debate the topic, "Developed nations should shoulder the responsibility for managing natural disasters."

dateline: UVI is a production of the UVI Public Relations Office. Contact us by telephone at 340-693-1056 or by fax at 340-693-1055.