

## **The 2026 VI Festival and Book Fair**

**Theme: Caribbean Literature: A Force of Representation**

### *In Memoriam*

*Honoring our Friends and Supporters no longer with us*

*Elisa McKay and Peter Roka*

### *ORDER OF PROGRAM*

**THURSDAY, APRIL 9**

#### **Pre Lit Fest Activities**

School Cavalcade: Authors' School Visits - 9:00 AM – 12:15 PM

- **St. Croix Educational Complex: Desmond Hall, Richard Warburg**
  - **St. Croix Central High School: Etaf Rum, Donna Hemans, Louise Stapleton**
  - **John H. Woodson Junior High School: Leon Perkins, Ryan Bachoo**
  - **Juanita Gardine School: Channa Bannis, Breanna McDaniel**
- Alfredo Andrews: Kelly Starling-Lyons**
- Nanda Reddy: Free Will Baptiste School K-12**

Opening Program/Reception

Government House | 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

**Mistress of Ceremonies:** UVI Provost Dr. Lora Bailey

**6: 05-- 6:10 Welcome Remarks:** Dr. Safiya George

6:10 –6:15 Alscess Lewis-Brown: Introduction of Authors

**Evannie Jeremiah and Yvette McMahan-Arnold**

Recognizing Lit Fest Supporters and Sponsors

Acknowledgements: Elisa McKay and Peter Roka (*Photographs of both are needed for the program*)

**6:20 to 6:35 Opening Lecture: *Setting the Tone*: Dr. Kenneth Ramchand “Caribbean Literature: A Force of Representation.”**

6:37 -6:50 Analysis of Short Story from TCW by Liz Llanos, Regina Keels, and Cleone Lynch

Introduction of Speaker Janis Valmond

7:00 to 7:05 Poem: Lieutenant Governor Tregenza Roach

7:06 to 7: 11 Remarks: Governor Albert Bryan

### **EAT, MINGLE AND MIX**

Music provided by Yanic Elizee

## **FRIDAY, APRIL 10**

### **LITERATURE IN CONVERSATION UVI Great Hall**

Timekeeper: Dr. Denise Blanchette

#### **Mistress of Ceremonies: Dean Kimarie Engerman**

8:45-9:14

Welcome: Festival Chair Alscess Lewis-Brown

Remarks: Commissioner of Tourism Jennifer Matarangas-King

Remarks: Executive Director of St. Croix Foundation for Community Development Deanna James

Remarks: UVI President Dr. Safiya George

#### **9:15–10:15 Keynote Panel: Literature & Identity — Crossing Borders**

Desmond Hall (Jamaican-born Young Adult author and acclaimed screenwriter known for gritty, realistic fiction), Etaf Rum (Palestinian American novelist), Nanda Reddy (Guyanese American novelist), as they reflect on how migration, diaspora, and cultural heritage shape writing.

Panelists will discuss the challenges and rewards of representing complex histories and identities, the power of fiction to bridge cultures, and the responsibility of writers to their communities.

Annie Paul - Interlocuter

10:16 – 10: 25

### **MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

**2025 Calypso Monarch of the Virgin Islands**

## **Calypsonian Lady McIntosh**

10:25–11:25 **Panel: “Caribbean Identity and Self—Determination in a Changing World: Policy, Advocacy, Art and the Tie that binds us** Dr. Malik Sekou - Professor (UVI), Dr. Carlyle Corbin, United Nation Representative, Dr. Mark Wenner, Professor (UVI)

**Interlocuter:** Monique Clendinen-Watson

11:30am – 12:00 noon Stephanie Chalana Brown and Cleone Lynch

**Reflecting on the work of a Virgin Islands author: Looking Back and Bringing Forward: Excerpts from: Harlem’s Danish American West Indian**  
by **Geraldo Guirty**

**12:00 - 12:15 Brown Bag Lunch / Bathroom Break**

## **CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS**

**Venue: NWW 102**

**12:30 PM – 1:15PM 1. Desmond Hall —*The Story Structure***

In this dynamic craft session, acclaimed writer Desmond Hall guides participants through the essential architecture of storytelling, revealing how tension, character, and narrative shape transform simple ideas into unforgettable fiction.

Facilitator: Dr. Vanda Espinosa

Venue : **REC 133**

**12:30 PM – 1:15PM Breanna McDaniel – So you want to write a children’s book?**

Learn Breanna McDaniel’s essentials of crafting a children’s book—from shaping memorable characters to building engaging plots using age-appropriate language. This workshop offers practical guidance, creative exercises, and insider tips to help you turn your ideas into a polished manuscript ready for young audiences.

Facilitator: Charlene Abramson-Joseph

**Venue: EVC 302**

**1:20 PM – 2:15 PM Annie Paul: Tips for editing your work**

Critic and editor Annie Paul offers practical, incisive guidance on revising drafts with clarity and confidence. From sharpening language to strengthening structure, this workshop empowers writers to refine their work with the keen eye of an editor.

Facilitator: Dr Kendell Daughtry

**Venue: EVC 302A**

**1:00PM – 2:00PM Nanda Reddy — *Crafting Stories of Transformation -Ed Complex***

Join novelist Nanda Reddy for a reflective and inspiring workshop on writing narratives of personal and communal change. Through discussion and guided exercises, participants learn how to build arcs that honor resilience, migration, and the power of becoming.

F. Gerard -- Facilitator

**Venue: EVC 303**

**2:20PM – 3:10PM Donna Hemans — *Setting: Writing the Diaspora***

In this immersive session, Donna Hemans illuminates how setting becomes its own character in stories shaped by displacement and belonging. Writers explore techniques for capturing place, memory, and cultural landscape in ways that deepen emotional resonance on the page.

Facilitator: Anthazia Kadir

**Venue: E**

**2:20PM – 3:10PM Ryan Bachoo — *Pass the Story On: Inspiring the Next Generation of West Indian Writers***

In this immersive session, the multimedia journalist and author Ryan Bachoo illuminates deep appreciation for West Indian literature and preserving Caribbean storytelling traditions. The workshop outlines ways to re-energise West Indian storytelling and inspire the young generation to not only read but to write Caribbean literature.

Facilitator: ???

## **BOOK BACCHANAL**

Caribbean Museum Center for the Arts 5:00 to 8:30 pm

Welcome: Dr. Janis Valmond

Live Music by Abbie Steelpan

Moko Jumbie Antics

Rhyme and Lyme West End - David Knight and Raven Phillips Open Mic Poetry (30 min)

Author Readings / Book Signings/ Sales Undercover Books

Facilitator: Dr. Janis Valmond and Alscess Lewis Brown

Etaf Rum, Shaun Pennington, Donna Hemans, Nanda Reddy, Desmond Hall, Ryan Bachoo

## **SATURDAY, APRIL 11 UVI GREAT HALL**

7:30 – 9:00 am Bush Tea Morning Social with DaraMonifah Cooper

**Dale Brown, Sejah Farms-- Facilitator**

Breakfast/ Live Music/ Entertainment

**9:00 Mistress of Ceremonies: Dr Yvette McMahan-Arnold**

**9: 15 - 9:45 Opening Conversation Edwidge Danticat**

**Interlocuter: Shawna Richards**

Begin the morning in the company of acclaimed Haitian-American writer **Edwidge Danticat**, whose storytelling has shaped contemporary Caribbean and global literature. In this intimate opening conversation, Danticat reflects on the craft, courage, and cultural memory that animate her work. Guided by **interlocutor Shawna Richards**, the session invites

audiences into a thoughtful dialogue on the power of narrative to heal, witness, and illuminate.

**9:50 – 10:50** Little Bell Caribbean publisher, **Mario Picayo** (Cuba, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands) will talk about the editorial philosophy, the books they publish, the authors they work with, and his two decades publishing children's books from regional writers and illustrators, and why it's important to create books that reflect young readers' realities.

**Facilitator: Marsha Messiah**

**Dance Performance to a Poem** from *The Caribbean Writer* Vol 39 by Dr. Elle Nielsen

10:55 – 11:50- **Intellectual Property: Artificial**

**Intelligence: Opportunity or Catastrophe** **Dr. Richard Warbaugh** and **Louise Stapleton** examine the rapidly shifting landscape of artificial intelligence and its impact on intellectual property. Implications for Caribbean creative writing and global publishing: Ethical questions around authorship, intellectual property and originality with Louise Stapleton

**Interlocuters: Author, Publisher, Scholar and Editor Annie Paul**

**and DaraMonifah Cooper, scholar, media professional.** Participants are invited to consider whether AI represents an unprecedented creative opportunity or a looming challenge for writers, artists, and cultural producers navigating questions of authorship, ownership, and innovation.

**11:55 – 12:05 - Brown bag lunch/Bathroom break**

**12: 05 - 12:20 Trozos: Sound as Spiritual Cartography by Yanira Gonzalez**

**Trozos: Sound as Spiritual Cartography is a high-intensity sonic journey mapping Caribbean identity through frequency and bone. From geological grounding to the "One Note" of Marley's "War," this presentation uses live percussion and ritual chant to transform historical silence into a "Seismic Event," reuniting the fragments of the Diaspora.**

**12:10 PM – 1:00 PM**

**Virgin Islands Writers Round Table The GREAT HALL**

**Stephanie Chalana Brown—Facilitator** A vibrant showcase of local literary talent, this round table brings Virgin Islands authors together to share excerpts, pitch their works, and illuminate the breadth of storytelling emerging from the territory. With each writer given an intimate 15-minute spotlight, attendees experience a rich cross-section of voices, styles, and visions shaping contemporary Virgin Islands literature.

Susan Allick Beach

**Author of:** *Ghost in my DNA*

Shaun Pennington

***The New Slavery: Sugar, Healthcare and the Medical Mafia***

Elle Nielsen

***Memoir of a Cruz Ting***

**Venue: RT Park, Large Conference Room**

**Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Albert Honoré**

**12:30 PM – 2:00 PM**

**Visual & Narrative Storytelling: Screening of “Gods of the Universe: Rise of the Star Child” — Cathy-Mae SitaRam**

Blending cinema and written narrative, Cathy-Mae SitaRam guides participants through the art of visual and narrative storytelling. With support from facilitator Dr. Sharon Honore, this session offers an insider’s look at filmmaking techniques and story craft, culminating in a film screening that brings theory to life on screen.

**Venue: EVC 302**

**1:00 PM – 1:45 PM**

**Decolonizing the Curriculum Through Caribbean Literature — UVI**

**Professor Anthazia Kadir** This session delves into the transformative power of Caribbean literature as a pedagogical tool. Participants explore how decolonial approaches to curriculum and classroom practice can reshape understanding, elevate regional voices, and re-center Caribbean knowledge traditions within educational spaces.

**Facilitator: Marsha Messiah**

**1:00 -2:00 Nanda Reddy ; Book Club Discussion of: *A Girl Within a Girl***

**Facilitator: Janis Valmond NW 103**

**1:10 PM – 2:15 PM Children’s Literature Workshop: Kelly Starling Lyons — “Going Down Home: Writing Your Family’s Story for Children” NWW102**

**Breanna McDaniel — Reading with the Girl Scouts**

**Facilitator: Chanelle John Heard**

**1:10 PM – 2:15 PM EVC 207**

**2:15PM – 3:00 PM Venue: The Great Hall**

**Etaf Rum — A Woman Is Not a Man Book Club (Facilitated by Dr. McMahan-Arnold)**

Step into an intimate and compelling conversation as acclaimed novelist **Etaf Rum** joins readers to explore the emotional depths and generational echoes of her celebrated novel, *A Woman Is Not a Man*.

Facilitator:

**4:00 p.m.**

**UNDER COVER BOOKS AUTHOR APPEARANCES:**

Featuring: Edwidge Danticat, Donna Hemans, Nanda Reddy, Etaf Rum, Desmond Hall, Channa Bannis, Richard Warburg, Breanna McDaniel, Kelly Starling Lyons ,

**5:00 PM**

**CANE ROOTS ART GALLERY — EKPHRASTIC POETRY  
COMPETITION--- Facilitated by Regina Keels**

Poets respond to exhibited artworks in real time.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 12**

Facilitator: Yvette McMahon- Arnold

11:00 am to 4:00 pm - Children's Literature Festival - Children's Museum of St. Croix Estate Whim

Kelly Starling Lyons,

Special Workshop children who wish to write a book

Breanna MacDaniel

Mario Picayo--- *Anansi and the Hummingbird*

Jamal Rogers Jr. - *The Island of Secrets* (This is the local 9-year-old that wrote the book)

Dr. Alexandra Jones - *Indya the Archaeologist*

Dr. Stacia Jung - *Grassy the Grasshopper*

Leon Perkins - *Value Your Future*

Channa Bannis - *I Love the Me I See and Daddy's Not Listening*

Kerry Phillips - *Captain Smiley*

2:00 – 5:00 pm **Writer's Roogoodoo** – online session (Sign up at [EventBrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com))

Writer's Roogoodoo is a recurring online gathering that brings together the community of TCW writers to share, reflect, and reconnect through the force of Caribbean storytelling. It is a welcoming space where contributors to any volume of the journal are invited to read from their published works, revisiting the memories and inspiration that shaped their writing.

More than reading, Writer's Roogoodoo is a familiar meeting place among friends—a known space where voices are heard, stories are honored, and the spirit of Caribbean storytelling continues to grow, strengthening the bonds within the TCW literary community.