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Central High's 'Iconic' Class of 2026 Graduates With Nearly Half Earning Honors and a Message to Defy Limits

The 152 graduates were celebrated for academic excellence, undefeated basketball seasons, new honor societies and an 80% drop in infractions, while speakers urged them to reject doubt, define their own paths and refuse to let scars have the final word.

Education / **Published On May 18, 2026 03:57 PM /**

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St. Croix Central High School's "Iconic" Class of 2026 fills Island Center on May 18, celebrating 152 graduates, schoolwide gains, academic honors and a message to rise beyond doubt and circumstance. By. DEAR PRODUCTIONS.

St. Croix Central High School's "Iconic" Class of 2026 graduated Monday in a ceremony that celebrated the achievements of 152 seniors, the school's progress over the past year, and a recurring message from speakers who urged graduates not to let doubt, hardship, or other people's expectations define their futures.

Principal Andrea Hobson opened by highlighting several firsts and major accomplishments at Central. She noted that the girls' and boys' basketball teams went undefeated this season, with the boys achieving that record for the second consecutive year. She also pointed to the introduction of National Honor Societies for English, Mathematics and Science, the return of Central's prom, and an 80 percent reduction in school infractions.

Addressing the graduates, Ms. Hobson said their time at Central had prepared them for what comes next.

"You have all the tools needed to become successful," she declared, reminding them of the attributes of a Carib — resilience, strength, and the support of the full St. Croix Central High School alumni community.

With the immediate future of the 152 graduates on the minds of many, Education Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington reminded the class that success does not follow one fixed route.

"There is no one path to success...never compare your journey to someone else's timeline," she said.

Wells-Hedrington also encouraged graduates to think beyond traditional measures of achievement, reminding them that "the world...needs compassionate people, courageous people, and people willing to uplift others as they climb."

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. praised the academic performance of the Class of 2026, noting that nearly half of the graduates were honor students. In brief remarks, he urged students not to allow naysayers or self-doubt to stop them.

"Don't tell yourself you can't do it, just try...don't be your own barrier," he said, referencing his own journey toward becoming governor, which he said began nearly 16 years ago.

He also advised graduates to learn from setbacks. "You do a self-evaluation and you look inside because you're the only person you could change."

Salutatorian Allysa Brady reflected on her decision to attend St. Croix Central High School, even though most of the students from her elementary school chose a different path.

"Being that I spent all my elementary years and junior high school years circulating with the same classmates, I felt as though I needed a change, even though I was an incoming freshman."

Although the decision represented a new beginning, Ms. Brady said Central was already familiar to her because her father and uncle had worked there as monitors. She said she found the environment welcoming, and credited her teachers, close friends and parents for guiding and nurturing her throughout high school.

To her parents, Iris and Raymond, she reserved her highest praise. "Because of you, I am proud to say that I have secured a full scholarship to study public health at Johnson C. Smith University in North Carolina. I am nothing short of appreciative. While I stand at this podium, the real honor

goes to you,” she declared.

Valedictorian Jahnyah Greenidge delivered a vulnerable and determined message about overcoming humble beginnings and proving wrong those who questioned what she could achieve.

“Coming from John F. Kennedy, I often heard that a girl from Kennedy can’t do that, but that same girl from John F. Kennedy is your class of 2026 valedictorian,” she said.

Ms. Greenidge noted that she had been ranked number one in the class since ninth grade.

“I found a fire, a determination fueled by every single person who underestimated me. This speech and this moment is for them, and more importantly, it's for every young person who's been told their circumstances dictate their destiny. We are here to prove them wrong,” she declared.

Guest speaker Jermaine Mulley, a St. Croix Central High School alumnus and the youngest person in National Guard history to serve as State Chaplain, also shared his own story of overcoming pain and doubt.

“It hurt when second-grade me overheard adults whispering after my mom died, ‘he's going to become another menace without his parents,’” he said.

Rev. Mulley said tragedy and difficult circumstances had marked his life early, and that the doubts of others continued through his school years. Still, he said, those doubts did not define him.

“It hurt when they told the dream in fifth grade that you'll never graduate on top of the sixth grade class. Well, they were right. I finished second, second to my neighbor, and then-girlfriend,” he said.

He urged the Class of 2026 to use his story as a reminder not to be confined by how others describe them. “Some people lose sleep over your dreams. Don't let it perturb you when they define you in hopes of confining you, because your story is bigger than their summary of you.”

Rev. Mulley also warned graduates not to focus only on appearance, applause or public validation.

“We live in a society that looks at likes and applause and validation and metrics and algorithms, and it's all good, but many people are performing while they're privately perishing,” he advised.

He closed by encouraging the graduates to keep building and becoming, even when life leaves them marked by difficulty.

“I want to encourage you to keep building anyway, to keep dreaming anyway, to keep becoming anywhere, because iconic people are not people without scars. There are people who refuse to let scars have the final word.”