

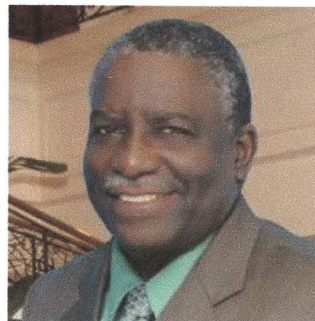
The Caribbean Writer

The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

APRIL 20, 2011

“Poetry is Relevant” says Lieutenant Governor Gregory Francis



Lt. Governor Gregory Francis is Crucian to the bones, born and reared here. He attended Central High School, which is where he was first exposed to poetry. He said, “reading poetry was part of English class in 10th grade.” After graduating from Central High School, Lt. Governor Francis elected to join the U.S. Army, where he worked himself up through the ranks serving as a Command Program Support Specialist, Supervisory Military Personal Specialist and Recruiting and Retention Manager for his 27 years tenure. While serving in the army he had the opportunity to live in Germany, Puerto Rico, as well as his homeland, the Virgin Islands.

His favorite poet is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and the poem that echoes in his mind is, “A Psalm of Life,” the first two stanzas of which mirrors the Lt. Governor’s outlook on life:

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou are, to dust thou returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

It was always the Lt. Governor’s intention to make something of his life and to leave a legacy. The final stanza of this poem serves as its own motivation.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Lt. Governor Francis says poetry is, “very relevant,” and helps people to express their feelings and explore ideas.

Lt. Governor Francis commitment’s to St. Croix is unquestionable and he is a firm supporter of education. He attended UVI, from where he received a certificate from the paralegal program. He states emphatically, “poetry should be taught in the schools.” He wants children in the Virgin Islands to understand how crucial it is for them to complete their education and excel in order to compete in the 21st Century. He urges them to achieve as much as they can as there are more opportunities available to them than when he was a boy.

Similar to his favorite poet, Longfellow, who was “a devoted husband and father with a keen feeling for the pleasures of home,” Lt. Governor Francis, happily married for 32 years, is a proud father of a son and three daughters. He relishes spending time with family and friends. He finds poetry “relaxing,” and hopes one day to have the time to write more poetry, but for now he offers you his first attempt.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Featured 1
Virgin
Islander
Lt. Governor
Gregory
Francis

Margaret 2
Walker

Poems by 3
UVI Students

Poems by 4
High School
Students

Test your 4
poetic know-
ledge





Lt. Governor Francis "wants children in the Virgin Islands to understand how crucial it is for them to complete their education and excel in order to compete in the 21st Century."

Eating Gumbo Crucian Style

Gregory Francis with Opal Palmer Adisa

We Crucians have our own flair
our own way of doing things.
We are a proud people
and full of grace.

Take eating Gumbo for instance.
It might have originated in Louisiana
but as a bonafide Crucian man of the
people

gumbo is just a variation of
conch in butter sauce with fungi

So here is how I eat it.
To begin - I use a plate not a bowl.
I spoon in the gumbo,
heap a mound of rice beside it
then I sit at ease
and munch away savoring
the delicious aroma of seafood.

I am a Crucian man
I love my food and whether
it is gumbo or kalaloo
I always eat Crucian style.

Henry Wadsworth-Longfellow, (1807-1882) was a commanding figure in the cultural life of nineteenth century America, so much so that his poetry was widely taught in schools throughout the USA, the Caribbean and in Europe. A graduate of Bowdoin College, where he met Nathaniel Hawthorne, who became his lifelong friend and literary buddy. After graduating from college, Longfellow spent three years touring Europe and studying European literature and history, which no doubt contributed to him writing six foreign language textbooks. His impressive scholarships earned him a professorship at Harvard in 1834, which led to his extensive association with the Cambridge area.

Introducing you to Margaret Walker

(July 7, 1915 – November 30, 1998)

Born in Birmingham, Alabama. "For My People," is her best known and anthologized poem.



- 1935 Received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Northwestern University.
- 1936 Began work with the Federal Writers' Project under the Works Progress Administration.
- 1942 Received her Master's Degree in Creative Writing from the University of Iowa.
- 1943 Married Firnist Alexander; had four children and moved to Mississippi.
- 1949 Appointed Literature Professor at what is today Jackson State University
- 1965 Earned her Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.
- 1968 Founded the Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now the Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center) at the school, where she served as the Institute's director.
- 1975 Released three albums of poetry on Folkways Records - *Margaret Walker Alexander Reads Langston Hughes, P.L. Dunbar, J.W. Johnson; Margaret Walker Reads Margaret Walker and Langston Hughes, and The Poetry of Margaret Walker.*

National
**POETRY
MONTH**
April

Awards:

For My People, won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition in 1942 and *Jubilee*, novel, also received critical acclaim, 1966.

Works:

For my people, 1942 & 1968

October Journey, 1973.

This is My Century: New and Collected Poems, 1989

Jubilee, 1999

Maryemma Graham, ed. (1990). *How I wrote Jubilee and other essays on life and literature.*

Maryemma Graham, ed. (2002). *Conversations with Margaret Walker*

Dark Blood

There were bizarre beginnings in old lands for the
making
of me. There were sugar sands and islands of fern
and
pearl, palm jungles and stretches of a never-ending
sea.

There were the wooing nights of tropical lands and
the cool
discretion of flowering plains between two stal-
wart
hills. They nurtured my coming with wanderlust.
I
sucked fevers of adventure through my veins with
my
mother's milk.

Someday I shall go to the tropical lands of my birth,
to the
coasts of continents and the tiny wharves of
island
shores. I shall roam the Balkans and the hot lanes
of
Africa and Asia. I shall stand on mountain tops
and
gaze on fertile homes below.

And when I return to Mobile I shall go by the way
of
Panama and Bocas del Toro to the littered streets
and
the one-room shacks of my old poverty, and blazing
suns
of other lands may struggle then to reconcile the
pride
and pain in me.

Elesha Hazel

English Major, STT Campus

Favorite Poet: None

"Poetry allows me to vent my feelings without the ridicule of society. I can be as loud, witty, and as inquisitive as I would like to be. It makes me feel happy, sad and after all is written, unconfined. Poetry is not only a form of writing but a lifeline, and an extension of myself."

Summary of Wisdom

Death comes to the dumb
Who never lay down their rum
God bless the foolish

Sarah Greenaway

English Major, STX Campus

Favorite Poet: Kamau Brathwaite

"Poetry is often a way to open up the mind to the softer, milder things in life. Poetry makes me feel different ways at times—sad or happy, depending on the tone of the given poem."

The Beauty of the Beach

I like to go down to the beach
and look upon the ocean's foam.
I like to hear the breakers roar;
and watch the seashells on the shore.

I linger on the beach a while
and watch the seagulls overhead.
I listen to their joyous cries
and taste the saltiness of the breeze.

I take a dip, pretend to swim
and after a while I feel refreshed.
I change and gather some seashells
to take home and set up in style.

It's time to go back to my home.
I gather up my scant supplies.
I say my goodbyes to the beach
and leave, with hopes to return soon.

