

# THE CARIBBEAN WRITER

The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

What is National Poetry Month 1

Goals for National Poetry Month 1

What you can do... 2

Featured VI Poet Gerwyn Todman 2

First National Poetry Month Celebration 3

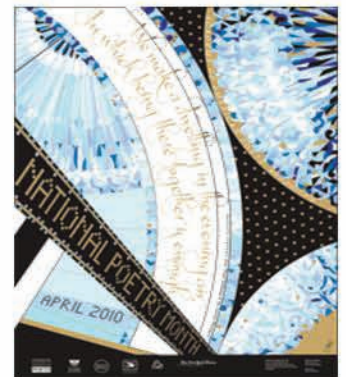
"Cruzan" By Opal Palmer Adisa 3

Win a copy of *Seasoning for the Mortar* 4

## What is National Poetry Month

*The Caribbean Writer* invites the entire UVI Community to join us in celebrating National Poetry Month in April. National Poetry Month is a month-long, national celebration of poetry established by the Academy of American Poets

in 1996. The concept is to widen the attention of individuals and the media—to the art of poetry, to living poets, to our complex poetic heritage, and to poetry books and journals of wide aesthetic range and concern.



2010 National Poetry Month Poster

## Goals for National Poetry Month

*The Caribbean Writer's* goals for National Poetry Month are to:

- ▶ Highlight the extraordinary legacy and achievement of Caribbean, and in particular, Virgin Island and Latin American poets.
- ▶ Introduce more Virgin Islanders and Caribbean people in general to the pleasures of reading poetry.
- ▶ Bring poets and poetry to the public in immediate and innovative ways by creating programs to combine music, dance and technology with poetry.
- ▶ Make poetry a more important part of the school curriculum in the Virgin Islands by establishing Poets in the School Programs here.
- ▶ Increase the attention paid to poetry by national and local media, by insisting that these groups regularly feature poets and poetry in their programming.
- ▶ Encourage increased publication, distribution, and sales of poetry books.
- ▶ Increase public and private philanthropic support for *The Caribbean Writer* and local poets.

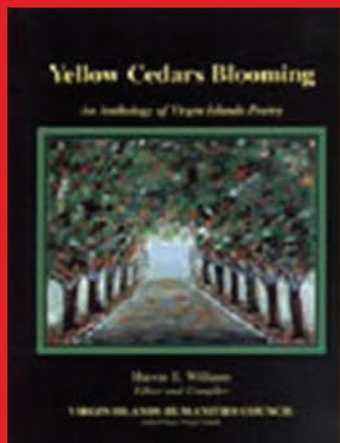


## What you can do...

We encourage all of you to find a poem you love and share it with your colleagues and family. Memorize a poem and recite it to friends. Join Opal Palmer Adisa, editor of *The Caribbean Writer* for the second Creative Luncheon (scheduled for Thursday April 8 from 12 noon to 1 p.m. in NW 102) and write a poem celebrating your life.

When we think of poetry in the Caribbean, we have to first look to the Oral Tradition, at those poems that were shared and handed down to us in the form of songs and tales. Marvin E. Williams, the former editor of *The Caribbean Writer*, compiled a seminal work, examining Virgin Islands poetry. The collection is entitled, *Yellow*

*Cedars Blooming—An Anthology of Virgin Islands Poetry*, and I invite each of you to read it. Those of you who are parents, get a copy and share it with your children so they know their history and culture.



“As we look to the past, we see the connections and links to the present...”

## Featured Virgin Island's Poet Gerwyn Todman

One of the important early writers from the above mentioned collection is Gerwyn Todman, St. Thomian born and educated (1899-1948), who later emigrated to New York, but remained intricately connected to his roots, and published one volume of poems *St Thomas: A Retrospective, 1921*. An excerpt of one of his poems “**Slavery Days**” appears below:

“A New World lay before the eyes  
Of Nations hot for fresh emprise,  
And nothing barred the conq'ring way  
Of those who would acquire sway.  
The Spaniard had, in ruthless mode,  
Made ill its bosom his abode,  
And swiftly drained each cavern-hold  
Of that most precious metal—gold.  
The French came and pitched his tent;  
And every nation which did care  
Made on its face a demesne fair.”

(To read this poem in its entirety, pick up a copy of *Yellow Cedars Blooming—An Anthology of Virgin Islands Poetry* at the UVI campus bookstores.)

As we look to the past, we see the connections and links to the present and St. Croix's own Marvin E. Williams offers us another perspective...

### The Mill Ruin Above Ham's Bluff

The sea's hoarse turbulent voice grates  
in the weary ears of this shell  
of a windmill above the bluff;  
its open mouth invites Prosperity,  
that thirsty estate whose memory only  
remains prosperous (perhaps prosperity  
lingers too in its rainbow back  
crabs that swiftly disappear in ravenous  
traps of our docked pirates or  
in search of rivers long eloped with  
conquistadors wearing Panama hats).

In this mill I see shells of hurricanes  
crushed by the reflection of their returned  
cruelty and magnificence; I feel my great father's  
arm crushed in the wheels that ground beyond  
greed's necessity, his nub soothed by  
the stubborn astonishment of sugar; I hear  
the bomba's ambivalence in the whip  
and the wound of his whipping, the slave  
ship stranded on the middle passage of

National  
**POETRY  
MONTH**  
April



The Mill Ruin Above Ham's Bluff cont'd...

our journey from ruins of empires  
to rise of profligate islands whose  
gnarled roots are the new world's.

Often I fix my face in that stone work  
mirror whose stare returns cracked, jagged  
to give me fault lines that reject the faults  
bequeathed in my inheritance. Yet I must  
accept its gift, for this bounty is  
the only one it can tender. Like this ochre  
shell I surrender, the conch swallowing  
without denying  
the sea's echo as its own signifying.



APRIL IS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Celebrate National Poetry Month  
with  
**THE CARIBBEAN WRITER**  
The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

**First Annual  
National Poetry Month Celebration**

featuring:

**Local Poets:**  
Dara Monifah Cooper      Vincent O. Cooper  
Patricia Harkins-Pierre      ChenziRa D. Kahina  
Winifred "Oyoko" Loving      Maud Pierre-Charles  
Tregenza A. Roach      Mark Sylvester  
Opal Palmer Adisa

**UVI Student Poets:**  
Carl "Mufasa" Christopher      Wendell Grouby Jr.  
Adelso Henry      Crystal Peter


**High School Poet:**  
Shanah Bannis

**When: Saturday April 10, 1-4 p.m.**  
**Where: EC 401—STX Campus &  
B110 (Chase Auditorium) - STT Campus**

**Open to all UVI Students, Faculty, Staff  
and the greater Virgin Islands community.**

For additional information:  
Call 692-4152 or email [info@thecaribbeanwriter.org](mailto:info@thecaribbeanwriter.org)

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[www.thecaribbeanwriter.org](http://www.thecaribbeanwriter.org)



## Cruzan

by Opal Palmer Adisa

the poetry  
of st. croix  
are its people  
with their salutary  
greeting  
marnin' marnin'  
referencing the day itself  
and embracing the person

it's the hardy  
delicious national dish  
of kallallo and fungi  
fueling you to work  
despite the heat  
kissing and embracing  
your body and soul

it's the wide stride  
leap of the moko jumbie  
forever stepping over  
a colonial legacy  
that would have it forget  
its mother Africa  
that prances and masks  
tenacity and victory  
in every stride

it's the grace of the yellow breast  
indigenous to these regions  
self-assured like its people  
soaring beyond the beyond  
backdropped against the ocean  
with her protecting arms  
cradling and soothing  
as her singing waters  
continuous

# National Poetry Month Weekly Prize Question

The Caribbean Writer invites you to **Win a Prize.**

Tell us:

Who is the first Caribbean Poet to win the Nobel Prize for Literature?

Provide Poet's Name, Island of Origin, Year and Title of winning Volume.

The first person to email us (qmars@uvi.edu) the correct answers will receive a complimentary copy of *Seasoning for the Mortar* and will be announced in next week's Poetry Month news.

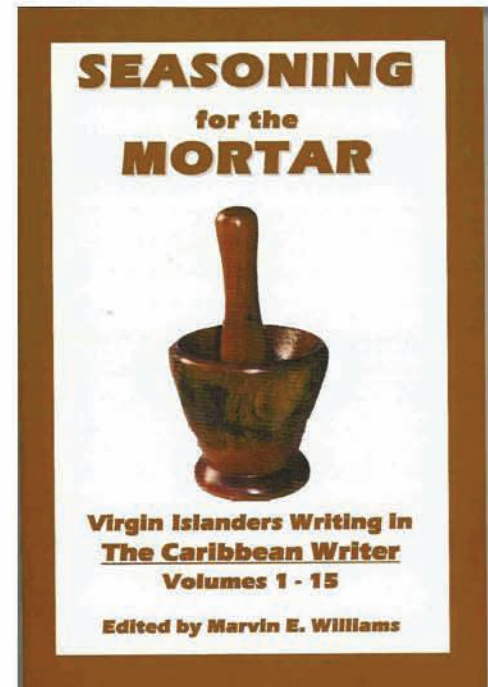
Stay tuned. . . . .

Email us relevant information on Virgin Islands poets.

See what poets and prizes we will offer next week.

Become a friend of *The Caribbean Writer*.

Subscribe today at [www.TheCaribbeanWriter.org](http://www.TheCaribbeanWriter.org)



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[www.thecaribbeanwriter.org](http://www.thecaribbeanwriter.org)

