

- Good morning, good morning. Boy, it's been a while since we had a live conversation with you. Good morning. This is the Disability Rights Center. We're back again hosting another project calling it Ability Radio, you and your life. My name is Amelia Headley LaMont, and I am joined happily by my co-host Iris Bermudez. Good morning, Iris.

- Good morning.

- How are you?

- And Happy New Year's, everybody.

- That's right. Thank you. Happy New Year. Happy New Year. We also are joined from time to time by our co-host Archie Jennings who is our managing attorney from the Disability Rights Center, who on occasion broadcasts from Saint Thomas. We'd like to thank you again for those of you who've been listening to our previous broadcast. We had a series called Ability Radio, you and your health, and all the guests we had during that series were available to participate to bring all of us much-needed health-related information and I can imagine that people will still have this as an issue and this may be something that we will have to revisit, given what may be occurring on a national scale with respect to the Affordable Care law.

- Yes, exactly.

- So, Iris, we will be relying upon your expertise in the next, you know, series of programing, but anyway, what we now have is a new iteration that's called Ability Radio, you and your life, and that's to help people live life to its fullest and promote awareness of what the U.S. Virgin Islands has to offer. We are learning from different organizations, individuals with different perspectives, of course, our emphasis is on the disability perspective, but during the course of these programs, you'll hear from individuals on what they're doing here in the U.S. Virgin Islands to make it better inclusive, it's always been inclusive, but maybe even preserve our history and culture and we've been, Iris has been doing a lot of very interesting research and we will be having a number of guests on the program who will help us learn more and scratch beneath the surface because there's such a rich tradition and history that we've even discussed a little bit this morning, so...

- Right. And a lot of the, a lot of the, the topics that I've been researching, they've been here for years, and years, and years. And it's so mind-boggling that, you know, we have all this information and all this history here in the Virgin Islands and we want the residents, the parents, the children to, let's get acquainted more with our history because it's fabulous, I love it. I love every minute that I spent doing some research.

- Yeah, and the excitement is showing. I'm glad, I'm, I mean, I'm glad for that and this is very important. So, we had invited the, a representative from the Saint Croix Landmarks Society, so it's very possible that they may come at some later time but I, we figured since we've not taken this opportunity to talk about the work that our office does which is Disability Rights Center the Virgin Islands that we wanted, and you know we may be aware of what we do, because we do it every day, but it's still important for individuals to know what's out there, as far as providing services. And I know quite often think, "Service, what's that?" You know, it's not usually a very positive view, so.

- Right.

- That's what I think we can at least tackle today as a neutral and we'll see where we go from there.

- Plus, we hadn't done it before, so.

- That's right. We haven't, we haven't tooted our own horn.

- That's right.

- First of all, let me say that, Iris, that's, you worked with what was then called, Disability Rights Center is its present name.

- Yeah. It used to be called the Committee on Coordination of Services or something like that, Advocacy...

- Committee of the Advocacy for the Developmentally Disabled, right.

- Yes. Yes. And that was directed by a wonderful, very knowledgeable man, not that you aren't, because you are. I mean, I think all the directors, you know, that I have seen throughout the years, very knowledgeable individuals, but that was Russell Richards.

- He was the founders, actually.

- He was. Yeah.

- Yeah.

- Basically, yeah. And he was instrumental and working with the bringing in the National Social Worker Association, as well as the implementation of the Virgin Islands Licensure Board of Social Workers. I mean, these were all the things that because of him, we implemented in the Virgin Islands, I remember I was just out of college when I met him and it was exciting to meet this guy who was so knowledgeable.

- Well, here's a deal. And I'll just be very brief because we have our new guest here, but Disability Rights Center or what's referred to as protection and advocacy organization began in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1977. It was designated by then Governor Juan Luis to be the protection advocacy organization for the territory. And it started initially with I believe just one grant that focused on individuals with developmental disabilities. Right. And over the years it grew, you know, and the name changed.

- Couple of times.

- Yes. Couple of times. I think I over [inaudible] twice, sorry. First it was Committee on Advocacy for Developmentally Disabled, then it was Virgin Islands Advocacy Agency, and then it became Virgin Islands Advocacy, Inc., and then now, it's, but, you know, it didn't tell people what we did. So, the legal name is still Virgin Islands Advocacy, Inc., but the trade name is Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. Well, I, my thunder is now stolen and I'm glad because we are accompanied by a very knowledgeable special guest, Sonia Jacobs Dow, director of the Landmark Society. Good morning.

- Good morning.

- I'm glad you made it. Welcome.

- Good morning. I was driving behind someone who I think was mistaking the brake pedal for the gas pedal.

- Oh, we know that.

- But thank you. Good morning to both of you and to your listening audience.

- Good morning.

- I'm pleased to be here. It's [inaudible] honored to be here.

- So, we're pleased to have you here.

- Iris shared your brochure and I am, I'm astounded by the amount of work that you do, that, your organization. So please, share with us.

- One of our trustees spent several weeks with us onboard everyday on last month and the month before and I think she said it best. She said, "I knew we did a lot and I knew that we didn't have a lot of resources. What I didn't know was that you were holding this together with spit and glue." So, I think, Amelia, you will understand what that is said. So, the other piece that's [inaudible] it's passion, spit, and glue. That's how we hold it together and that's how we do everything that we do. Landmark Society has been around in, under one name or another since 1948. It started as a very diverse, ethnically diverse organization, local people like Ms. Annie D. Shabbir, Amphlett Leader and others as well as servicemen who had been stationed here during the war and then returned to live on Saint Croix. So, there was this mix and they were interested individually in collecting. They have been picking up artifacts, they own furniture, and that kind of thing, but they also wanted to make it available to the public. So, they, over the years helped to establish what is now the museum at the Steeple Building, that first collection that the national park owns, they were involved as a nonprofit and then there was a government organization that was formed, a museum commission, and then there's actually a law passed where the commission is to be abolished once what is now the Landmark Society is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) and then the responsibility is passed to that. So, and then in 1954 the Estate Whim Museum property was leased to Landmark Society. So, and we've since acquired another acre and a bit that we own, but of the almost of the 12 acres there, 11 acres belong to the government. And our lease from the government landmarks has raised the money to restore the buildings. The great house which is the largest building and the one most people think of when they think of the museum didn't have much of a roof, didn't have much of a floor at the time, and then out of use for a number of years. I think the last private family that owned that property was the Smith, Latimer family. But after that, I think the Red Cross had used it. There was a school there at one time, there were government offices and different things. But we were able to, and I say we, even though I wasn't there at the time, but Landmark Society was able to restore the buildings, to begin to collect furniture and artifacts that represent Saint Croix's culture and history. And of course you can't do Saint Croix's culture and history without touching Saint Thomas and Saint John because we are so, you know, we're one, we're really one, you know. When you look at early censuses, you'd be surprised at how many Crucians spent time on Saint Thomas, they move for work. And you'd also be surprised at some of the names that we now connect with Saint Thomas that are present on Saint Croix. You know, the van Beverhoudts, the Elskels, you know, all of those "Saint Thomas" names are living on Saint Croix, in the late 1700s and early 1800s. And also, when you look at censuses, one thing that always brings a smile to my face is the number of Puerto Rican families that are here way before the 1920s. I mean, this is, the names are there very early on. Some of this is by their choice. But we're also cognizant and we can talk a little bit about how the planters who own plantations and enslaved people here, how they used [inaudible] and other islands and what they did. But, so Estate Whim Museum opened in 1954 and it consists of the great house. There are two large exhibit halls, where we have exhibits that rotate. There's also an, the cookhouse, which is not the original cookhouse, but it was part of the slave quarters that was converted into a cookhouse. The original cookhouse was not attached but adjacent to the Great House and that's where our museum store is now and we've left the floor, we took up the rug that was there, so you can see the floor where the cookhouse actually stopped, where the masonry floor stopped, and then the wooden floor that was put in to, when it was attached to the Great House. There's also a cottage at the back that was built in the 1980s but to resemble the types of cottages that families moved into after emancipation. There's some before but mostly after emancipation where you have more than one room that you're living in and it's slightly larger than the ones that would have been existed then, but it allows people to move around in the space and that is now a permanent exhibit or the front half of it is a permanent exhibit called My Granny House. And deliberately Granny does not have an apostrophe as on it because that's not Crucian. It's My Granny House. And it's a compilation of all the people who were involved and what they remember of their grandparents or visiting houses like that. So, you see what it looks like without indoor, without plumbing and indoor bathroom facilities and that kind of thing. And then, of course, the large, the larger area of the museum is the factory area where the chimney and the mill are. And so that's all part of the tour when you come to Whim Museum and you pay a very modest admission. That is all covered. Our research library and archives is also located on the property. And then it occupies the smallest place on the property, but it has the largest and most valuable collection. The records for the Danish West Indies are unparalleled in any other former

colony. It, they just don't exist. People from the United States always have not true envy but are very wistful when they learn about our records because in the United States, enslaved people are rarely found in records prior to emancipation. The Danes were small in number. Denmark is a small country and the Danes who came here were mostly in government, including the military. There was always this open migration, so you have people coming from England, from Switz., from Scotland, from Ireland, either directly or through the British West Indies. And you see their names and their names still exist. The McIntosh and the [inaudible] all the...

- And McKay.

- McKay. As well with, McKays.

- [laughs]

- That's why that name is so, and it's part if the reason that we can find similarities between the Crucian accent and Irish accents and the way words are pronounced and stuff because many of those people are on the plantations as owners, managers, or overseers.

- And let's...

- We need to go to break?

- Yeah, we do.

- Okay.

- We do. You're, you're savvy.

- I'll tell you.

- We'll be right back. We're back. You're listening to Ability Radio, you and your life. I'm your co-host Amelia Headley LaMont joined by Iris Bermudez and our special guest today is Sonia Jacobs Dow, the director of the Saint Croix Landmark Society. Iris, you had a question?

- Yes. We were commenting during the break that I went to the Whim Great House and as I went up and parked, I felt so nostalgic. I feel like I was centuries away from where I am presently. And that prompt and when I went in and I saw everything that I saw, I said, "Oh, my God. This is amazing." And then, I went and did some research. I went home and did some research and I found some of my ancestors were listed in the 1940 census. I couldn't believe it. I got so excited I started calling all my family.

- [laughs]

- And they were in King Cross Street at Christiansted. I, I'm just, I'm just, I'm just amazed.

- You got deep roots.

- I got deep roots, yes, yes.

- We did a workshop one time because, and we, there's so many things that we do. So, you guys be sure and let me focus on whatever you're more interested in, but we offer workshops through our library and archives, because as I was saying earlier, the Danish West Indies' record set is so unique. In order to track, initially the Danish West Indies were owned, operated by the Danish India and Guinea Company. That was the Danish Monarch and some of his wealthy friends had formed this company and they were operating between what is now the Virgin Islands, West Africa, Denmark, and then also they had colonies in India. And, I mean their investment was in the slave trade. That's what they were doing is buying and selling people and moving. And not only buying and selling and making money that way, but also taxing

the enslaved as property. So, in the same way that our government now sends you out to tax bill for real estate, there was a requirement that you had to submit a report every year. You had to submit your tax list and indicate who you were enslaved and you indicated who is living on the property, white and black, free and enslaved. And one thing that's, it's always hard even to say is with a value next to the person's name. So, in Danish currency, what the person was valued and you see the tradesmen, coopers, and carpenter, and mason have a higher value. The older men who are able to work hard is out in the fields, they're value is higher and it goes from there to those who may and somehow be in capacity did or are children. And then, you have the women and half-grown girls and then, the children. But those records are kept, so, that the government can do the taxing, right. But I think that they had assistant for checks and balances. So, the churches are also required to baptize these non-humans, right. But it's always kind of interesting to me and I wonder if I want think and I have, I have an ancestor and he's siblings who were enslavers. So, when I speak, I'm speaking about them. You know, I've been wondering if they were hedging their bets. You know, if we baptize him and we get to happen to find they're human, well, at least we'll be able to say, well, we baptized him, you know, we brought them to the Lord, I don't know. All right. I hope to them someday, in the other world, because hopefully they had an opportunity to ask forgiveness and use the opportunity. But anyways, so you have the system where the church is now required to baptize and every quarter, submit the records. So, that's how you get records of baptisms, of confirmations, of marriages, and deaths. And you have, so, some churches continue to keep their own books and then submit the government form, and there are a couple of churches who decide to use the government form as their new form. And you see notations in the record books. But you have these incredible records.

- Oh, yeah.

- You know, and there are, their records go back into the 1700s. You know, I, the oldest record I've found in my own family is the 1797 mortgage.

- Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. Wow.

- Because you could borrow money to enslave people. And so, and then there are restrictions and how I came to that was, I have a three-times great grandmother whose name is Yarako, she's born in Africa. And she always appears in the census as Yarako and I thought, "Why did she get to keep her African name because she's baptized Nancy. I had that record but she's never Nancy. And someone said look for a mortgage because if she was bought with a mortgage her name can't be changed until the mortgage is paid off. And sure enough one of the researches at the library found the 1797 record where she and 10 other people are purchased by Hannah Heilicher. And so, you know, talk about, you know, feeling like you've gone back so it's possibly, it's quite possible to follow your ancestors across the Virgin Islands and beyond because their ship manifest, their other records that allow you to do that, and that's what our research library does, is we, one of the things we do. We help academic researchers. We're working on books and projects for school and stuff. But the bulk of the people who come to the library are trying to trace ancestors. There's some...

- Where is [inaudible] where is this library held? Is it [inaudible]

- The library is on the Estate Whim property. It's the north, southwest corner of the property. And so if you go to the exhibit halls, it's at the end of that building. You can come back outside and then there's a door that lead to, it's a very small space. I like to tell people that 10 people come and sit down and nobody moves they'll be comfortable. You know, but you move because you're between the computers where you can access, have online access, internet access to use resources that are online, you also have access to the VISHA database. And VISHA is the Virgin Islands Social History Associates led by Dr. George Tyson who took records, some that Landmarks had, other records that they got in Denmark, and created this database so you can actually go and search for, you know, Joseph [inaudible] and everywhere that his name appears will show up. So it could be a record of his own baptism, of his confirmation, of his marriage, of him baptized, standing as godparent for somebody's child, a witness of, at a wedding, if he's included in that, when they had mass vaccinations or in school list, or if he comes from Europe and he has a burger brief which is kind of a combination immigration paper, business license kind of document.

So all of those records, which is a good bit of them. There's still a few records that aren't on the database but a lot of records are, and so you can search for that and then if you find your grandmother's or great grandmother's baptism and you know that it's at Holy Cross Catholic Church then you can turn around and we have the, a copy of the book so you can see the paper copy and make a copy of this document where they were baptized. So, it's amazing what the records that were created and what you can do. Right now, I just, at the end of December, we made a presentation to some Schuster cousin-family as we like to call them because we don't know our exact connection, but we always consider ourselves family on the, one of their ancestors, their eldest ancestor that we can find and so we try to present showing them how we had to dig through the records, what we did, what path we took. We had a record of him as a free colored person and in that record it indicated how he became free and that his freedom was bought from a certain person. And his mother's name, his mother's first name was also on that record. So that sent us looking because of the family from whom he was bought and looking for his mother with that family, and going from there, so we've been able to show people how you can weave your way back.

- That is so amazing because even last night when I was going through, doing my research and I don't know all these intricacies that you've talked about, but, you know, it's just so amazing to see all the names, families here. It's beautiful.

- We'll be right back. We have more questions. Sonia Jacobs Dow. We're back. You're listening to Ability Radio, you and your life. My name is Amelia Headley LaMont. I am joined by my co-host Iris Bermudez. And our special guest this morning is Sonia Jacobs Dow of the Saint Croix Landmarks Society. Well, during the break we talked about a number of other things that the Landmarks Society is doing and of course since this is a disability rights viewpoint, I hear that there are some excess issues that you've been addressing. Can you tell us a little about that?

- There's a ramp on the north side of the Great House which is the side closest to Queen Mary Highway. And so there's actually another driveway that you come there. So, if people are interested in coming whether it's for a tour or to any events that we have at the Great House, there's access there. We are also searching for funding and a design that would allow us to redo our walkways. Our walkways have pretty much been gravel and because of the slope of the property all this rain that we had last year has been washing the gravel to the back of the property, so we want to find the fund and to be able to do that so that it'll be easier for someone in the wheelchair or a walker or whatever to move on there. There are two rooms that are not easily accessible because they have steps either going up to them or going down into the room, but we've been known to help, grab somebody's wheelchair and take them down to two steps they need to go to be able to get in, but we wanna look at that too and see even though we're exempt because of the historic nature of the buildings, we still want the property to be accessible to individuals, because as I was telling you [inaudible] the brake, it, it's easy to see Estate Whim Museum and Apothecary Hall Museum, the small passive exhibit that we have in Christiansted as being tourist attractions. You know we think of, when we travel, we might go to museums, but the museums are such a small part. Even though physically they're a big part of what we do. In terms of the scope of the work that Landmarks Society does are a very small part. We exist for the purpose of trying to make sure that our young people and our not-so-young people know who they are. That's what we're doing is, because if you, whether it's through research, through our history and culture workshops, through experiences or tradition bearers if you understand more fully who you are, who you come from, how your family fit in to the fabric of this community, how they contributed, how all those pieces fit together then you have a sense of who you are, and can look up what your purpose might be, here. And I think it engenders a natural sense of responsibility to represent well those who have gone before us and to prepare for those who are coming after. And I think the way that I see that best is for the last probably six years without us ever advertising anything, we had been inundated by teenagers in the summer who want to spend their summer volunteering at Landmarks.

- That's fantastic.

- I mean, it's, we, at first, we weren't sure what to do because our staff is so small and we wanted to, we wanted to be able to structure it so we could provide a good experience for them and that it would be good for us but they just kept coming. I remember one year we had 18, just, it was like two people came

then they must have told somebody else and before we knew it we had 18 young people saying, "Can we volunteer with you?" And it's harder for them to volunteer during the year because the museum closes at 3:00, you know, before they get out of school, and then there's only Saturdays or evenings. But, so what we've done is we created a program called Junior Preservationists and when young people come, they get to learn about the museum, they can learn how to be and do the tours. They can be junior curators and help with exhibits. And last summer they not only helped with exhibits, they researched, curated, and constructed an exhibit called Breaking the Silence, the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

- And these were high school students?

- These were two junior high school students.

- Oh, my goodness.

- And the rest were high school students. Only one was a senior, the others were ninth through eleventh grade. These were students that with Mr. Duane Howell and Dr. Loren Larson who are both members of our board as well as other teachers, Risa Riley, and I'm gonna go back, Ms. Johnson. I'm forgetting her first name right now but they had been working with them with the UNESCO project. There's a collaboration between schools in Denmark and schools in the Virgin Islands and Denmark has been making, has made several trips here. Because Denmark doesn't have a curriculum to teach about the period of enslavement.

- Hmm...

- Wow.

- So most Danes that came to the Virgin Islands would say to us that they know that the Virgin Islands were once the Danish West Indies and they know that, or believe that Peter von Scholten freed the slaves and that would be pretty much the extent of their knowledge because there's no formal curriculum.

- Right.

- So over the last few years, our schools have been collaborating with schools in Denmark to help create a curriculum and last April was the first time that a group of students from the Virgin Islands was able to go to Denmark. And we facilitated that trip for them and said to them, "Okay, when you come back, we want you to do an exhibit." Well, they exceeded. They blew us out the water. They just, you've got to come see this exhibit. It's in the room, the, part of the slave quarters right next to the cookhouse and it's called Breaking the Silence. And they went, they just, I don't think those students yet fully understand the impact of what you've done. It's a very moving exhibit. It touches all the senses on, you just, I have not, it's been six months and I have not yet been able to, in one visit, go through the entire exhibit.

- My goodness.

- I always, because I always get emotional after two or three panels and I got to go, you know, and then I'll come back and look, but I, and well, I'm hoping for the day when I can go in and go from one part to another. In October, the students did a panel discussion for us where they talked about their experience not only with their trip but in doing this and they're just amazing. I told them at the end of it, "Okay, now, I can retire." Because, you know, because they each had a segment that they talk, that they researched and then they were able to present that and answer questions and so what we're trying to do now and we've just received some funding that's gonna allow us to begin to do this, to turn that exhibit into a traveling exhibit, so that it can go to Saint Thomas and Saint John and just started, or requested a chance to speak with some friends at Tourism and, Tourism, the Department Of Tourism is our greatest friend, to maybe go with them to some of the areas of the states where there's a large proportion of Virgin Islanders.

- Atlanta.

- And take the exhibit, and maybe along with a lecture series and be able to leave the exhibit there for a few months so that during the centennial, we not only can reach out to Virgin Islanders in the diaspora but through the larger communities that they live in so we can teach the United States about the Virgin Islands. You know, we've been a part for a hundred, a part of them for a hundred years and yet a lot of people don't know that much about us and our history. So we're hoping that that will come about, that we'll be able to do at least one or two of those during this year. And so, to have young people around you doing that, you know, we have a very small internship program, again for the same reasons and you wanna be able to match them to a mentor. But in 2015, three college students created an exhibit which is outdoors calls, called Long Rows and Big Yards and a long row is a building about 40 by 15 feet that was then divided into at least two units, sometimes three. And so you'd have different family living in, "under the units," one of our team members Summer [inaudible] Brown likes to say, "No, they're weren't living. They were sleeping indoors. They were living in the big yard," because in the big yard is where you cooked, where you washed, you know, where you did all, where you might have practiced a trade and where you interacted with each other. So they created this facade of a long row and when our tradition bearers are there as part of the living museum, several of them are in that area, so Iris would then feel even more like she's been transported back. And they could be doing anything from making fish pods to making traditional instruments to singing cariso and drumming, and so it just adds to the experience of the museum when they're there.

- So this is avail, this is not present on the property now, is it?

- We're about to start. In February, by February 1st, we'll be back. We're waiting on the funding to come through. The Department of Tourism has for the last two years funded the living museum component. And so we're starting back next Thursday. We have a small, we have a program. They'll be there and then, and then we'll pull them back in. But it really brings the whole place to life on, because otherwise, you go for a tour in the Great House and then you can walk the rest of the property by yourself but when there are tradition bearers around and they also are available. We have a number of schools who bring their classes for a culture and history and workshop so it could be a workshop on drumming or how to make these instruments and Dean Hodge normally will talk to them about tramping and, you know, he'll do a small tramp, a Crucian tramp, the kind of tramp that doesn't require working your hips too much. You know, you know, you [inaudible] that we as children, our parents could let us go in it and not worry about it, so that they get that experience and to see how the instruments were made for that. At Christmas time, well, we did our Old-Time Crucian Christmas which is always about, we do it four nights normally and we're evaluating that because it bumps into sunset jazz and it bumps into all these other festivals that have been coming up, but we usually do a Wednesday-through-Saturday of Old-Time Crucian Christmas. We have musicians who volunteer and come and provide the music, the entire museum is decorated using a lot of local greenery and stuff. And then we have food on sale and it's like a party. It's like an old-time party you might have if you went to your godparents' house and, you know, all the other family were there because people move as a family. They weren't children's parties, these are adult parties and we just party [inaudible]

- Right, right.

- And so people, at the first few years we did it, people would just come through, see the decorations and then leave. Now, people come and linger and they'll be there sometimes for the three hours that we're there. So this, the last night, Zoraida, my sister, Zoraida Jacobs, my sister that I admire so much for the things that she's done over the years, she revived something that she had revived once before at 4-H which is a lantern and mask parade, which was the traditional way that the village, the Christmas festival village was opened. And it's a parade where the, adults and children make masks and they make lanterns with candles and they used none, what's the word I want? Non-amplified music. So it's a music that, you know, you play without the amplification and they would go down at night and that's how the village would open. So we did a workshop that afternoon.

- Sounds like fun.

- And the kids make, yeah, there were some adults who made lanterns and masks and then they paraded around the museum property, so it was pretty cool. I think the video is still on Facebook. But, you know, so, it's all of that that we're doing all year trying to make sure that our culture is preserved because the only way to preserve it is to teach it, you know, and let somebody else [inaudible]

- And you also have a Candlelight series coming up?

- We have a Candlelight series coming up. We start this coming Friday and Saturday, January 20th and 21st. Candlelight is in its, I wanna say our 32nd year, 31st or 32nd year of presenting classical music in the Great House by candlelight. And this week, it's Aziwi, Azikiwe, Amadi Azikiwe who plays the viola and violin. And he is accompanied by George Lopez on piano. And so the concerts are Friday night and Saturday at 7:30. On Friday morning, there's a list, there's a companion education program to this, so Listen & Learn is taking place, I believe at John Woodson School at 9:45 on Friday morning and we usually have, we haven't gotten our notification yet but we usually have a grant from VICA that allows us to bus students from the schools to the location where we're doing this. So, all teachers have to do is get their permission slips and stuff in place, register with us by Wednesday and then we provide transportation. So the same musicians do this workshop on Friday morning and then the concerts. And I'm going to invite the two of you to come to our concert.

- Okay.

- I'd love to, yeah.

- I'm gonna give you each two seats. Your choice at Friday. Well, we have our engineer here so I have to do three sets of [inaudible]

- There you go.

- So just call Maria Quinones in our office, 772-0598, let her know which night you wanna come and who your guest is. And you'll be our guest.

- Well, let me ask you this. How can the general public know, you know, all these activities. You've got a lot. Is there a, obviously a phone number.

- Right.

- But is there a calendar of the landmark, you know, activities?

- We're working on something. We, our website unfortunately was hacked a little while back, so sometimes when you go to our website, they try to sell you stuff. And so, we've just entered into a contract with someone to do a new, we've actually had selected the person a long time ago but didn't have the funding to do it. But we've entered into a contract with him to do our new website. Our Facebook page is more up-to-date.

- Okay.

- Saint Croix Landmark Society. There are a number, Facebook allows people to create pages so, but ours is Saint Croix Landmark Society.

- Okay.

- And there's also an Estate Whim one. So, that's always a good place and then by calling our office. Hopefully, by the end of this month if not very early February, our website will be back on. You can also join our email list, even by going to our old website which is Saint, www.saintcroixlandmarks.org. You can still join our email list and then we send out an e-blast with the things that we're doing. So, a lot is going on. The Candlelight series will continue on February, it'll continue through April. In February, we have Trio

Montage which will be performed in a number, work from several composers but the one that we're most interested in is Valencio Jackson, Jr. who is a Crucian-born composer and they will be performing some of his works.

- Wow.

- In March, we are organizing all of the Virgin Islanders that we can find who are classically trained and we're having a Virgin Islands classical music festival with them and we're gonna do three days of concerts because it's a larger group. And then in April, it's Prof. Elvira Green out of North Carolina who has trained a number of our classical musicians.

- Oh, my goodness.

- And she's coming down to perform. So, it's an exciting time when we have our candlelight concerts. We open usually by 6:00 p.m. so our exhibits are open. You can come and see the exhibits, the cookhouse is open at least one of the nights of that weekend, the Cash Bar is open, and then the concert starts at 7:30. And we do assigned seating so when you make your reservation, you know what seat you're gonna get. So, no fighting for seats or anything like that. So, it, and then in the summer, we do world music, usually in conjunction with our Come Home to Saint Croix program. And I just wanted to mention that because Come Home to Saint Croix is designed for family reunions, to make it easy for you to do a family reunion. So if you gather your family, we'll have the event. So, we have eight days of activities. The, we start with a spiritual ceremony to honor our ancestors and then throughout that week, we do workshops on genealogy, workshops on planning family reunions, and other things. We do at least two places that matter where we go to a historic site and tell the story of that site with the historian and archaeologist people who live down that site who have family ties. We usually include in that a visit to Sandy Point which, and we're hoping that this year we can visit the Aklis Site at Sandy Point which a lot of people don't know about. It's one of the oldest pre-Columbian sites, and, right here on Saint Croix. And so, we do that. We have a quadrille dance and we preface the quadrille dance with Quadrille 101. So if you need a refresher course, you can go to that. And we end with an old-time family day. And it's rolling. There's always something going on. We just heard this week from Ben Besiakov who's a very famous jazz musician out of Denmark with Virgin Islands ties. His grandfather was born, was Victor Cornelius who was born on Saint Croix. And Ben has been here before in a concert and he sent me an email this week. He will be here in March. So, if Ben is coming, we're gonna be doing something with Ben. So, March is getting even more packed than it normally is. So there's lots going on and just, we're always in need of volunteers.

- That's [inaudible]

- Always, always. We're a small team. Ten people who run two museums and the research library and about fifteen education programs. So, we're always in need of volunteers. Whatever your skills are and your interest, we can find, we can match you to something at Landmarks. And we are going to be hiring very soon because thanks to a donation from Limetree Bay Terminals, we now have the resources to be able to expand some of our education programs and so we're going to be hiring two part-time people to assist us with those education programs. Just, it's a good start to the year.

- It's a wonderful start.

- A wonderful, wonderful start. And of course, we're always raising money for the Great House. Right now, the Great House has for a number of years had a leak in the roof. The estimate continues to go up because of the volatile price of shingles and the price right now is a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to repair it. So we are looking for an alternative material that could be, that would last longer than shingles but would still have a historic appearance. And so anyone who wants to help with that, including being on the community that's raising funds for that, we'd love to have you.

- [inaudible] okay. We're gonna take another break and we'll be right back. We're back. You're listening to Ability Radio, you and your life. Our special guest today is Sonia Jacobs Dow from the Saint Croix

Landmarks Society. If you've missed any portion of this exciting program this morning, we will be posting this show on our website. It's on drcvi.org and, so, don't feel it, you know, if you missed a little smidgen here that, it's forever loss, we will be archiving this information. Sonia, before we go too far, tell the listening audience again, how can somebody get in touch with your organization to find out more about the activities which is so varied.

- [inaudible]

- All right. Saint Croix Landmarks Society, 772-0598. You can come, our main office is at the Estate Whim Museum. We are also on Facebook as the Saint Croix Landmarks Society. Our website hopefully will be up to date within a month. We're creating a new website and we're gonna migrate information. But those are our best, you can go to the old website which is www.stcroixlandmarks.org and you can join our email list because we send out an email at least every other week with whatever is going on so that you'll know. But our concerts are gonna be four months, January through April. We're gonna have house tours on the first two Wednesdays of March, well, I think it's March 1st and 8th. And house tours for those who don't know. One of our major fundraisers, people generously allow us to sell tours of their homes. And so we can have three or four houses on a tour. We gather at a central location. The cost is \$35 per person and we're gonna do something special for those drivers who bring a full car this year. We're gonna allow the driver to go free if they have at least three people in their vehicle. It encourages carpooling, encourages friends to come together. And so then we divide the group into caravans so that only one group goes to a house at a time and they get to tour those houses and then rotate to the others. So it starts, usually our tours, we leave the location where we've met at 9:30. We start selling tickets at 9:00. And it's the fundraiser that for us takes the least staff resources, and has the greatest potential. So, if you really wanna support Landmarks, that's a good way. Of course, being a member of the Landmarks Society is a wonderful way and our membership start at \$50 for individuals and those funds go towards what we do. The two museums, the Apothecary Hall Museum on Queen Cross Street in Christiansted which is a small passive exhibit, the Estate Whim Museum, our research library and archives, and all of our education programs that we do. We are always open to ideas, if we can assist you with research, if you have artifacts that you would like to see displayed at Estate Whim, we can work on that. We accept donations of artifacts but we also do loans where someone may lend an artifact for five years or something and it still belongs to them. In fact, right now, we have in the Great House, the bed that belonged, a mahogany four-poster bed that belonged to former Governor Melvin H. Evans. And we're so grateful to his family for allowing that. The bed that was in the Great House was an English-made bed which is different from the Crucian bed and we found out as we tried to disassemble it that it wasn't, all the pieces didn't all match. They're, they've been put together. But Governor Evans' bed, which came from his aunt Rachel Hill in Frederiksted, her husband, Louis Hill was a civic activist, and so we've got the history of that one. So, there's lots going on. Everything is always changing. The Has [inaudible] Has Man and Has Reason exhibit is still up, those of you who love horse racing, and if you, if you didn't know all the places on Saint Croix where it was once a racetrack, you gotta come see this exhibit. Our volunteers who put that together are wonderful group who also work in the library. And we also have a, the exhibit, The Descendants of John Charles Thomson which includes some of the Adams family and the Solomons and others. That exhibit is a Venus Johannes, African Venus on Saint Croix, is, tells the story of a woman who was enslaved in Africa on Goree Island, became free because a ship captain declared his love for her and married her, made her free. He was in Africa bring, having been sent to bring a shipload of enslaved people. And unfortunately, when he got to Saint Croix, the only, the only person he sold into slavery was his wife Venus.

- Oh, what?

- So this exhibit tells her story and Amelia, as an attorney, you would know. This is one I'd love to have a panel of attorneys and judges talk about.

- This is fascinating.

- It tells the story of how she gained her freedom again. And then there's a small exhibit...

- And divorced her husband.
- Oh, he took off. He sold her and took off.
- Oh, yeah.
- And then there's a small exhibit with a photograph of Mr. Cliff Mahony, Maroni, a photographer who moved here in the '70s and that's a nice one. Because if you, if you grew up in the '70s like I did, you're gonna be surprised at how many people you recognize in these photographs. I've been trying to identify people in there. So, lots to see and just, you know, any questions that anybody has, 772-0598. And you can also email us at info@stcroixlandmarks.org.
- And this is all at the Whim Museum?
- All at the museum.
- Oh, my goodness.
- Thank you so much.
- Oh, my goodness.
- And that's why the listening audience must go to the Whim Museum. You're gonna be so impressed and so happy and sad at the same time, because that's how I felt.
- It is. Yeah, yeah.
- I felt that way. So please go.
- Well, thanks again. We will be back next week live. Again, Ability Road, you and your health. I'm your co-host Amelia Headley LaMont. Iris, thank you so much. Sonia, this has been very, very instructive and I hope that we can have you back...
- Yes.
- ...very soon.
- Thank you so much. Thank you and I'd be happy to come back. Thank you so much.
- Great. Thank you. Have a good Saturday.