

Good day distinguished guests, friends, and family. Today, we gather to celebrate an extraordinary man whose compassion, dedication, and unwavering service have touched countless lives in the Virgin Islands and beyond. It is with immense pride and gratitude that I speak on behalf of my family to Honor my uncle, James Sasso, for his remarkable contributions as a funeral director and a pillar of the community.

For many years James Sasso has served the people of the Virgin Islands with a heart full of empathy, a commitment to dignity and a distinct style. As a funeral director, he has walked alongside families during their most difficult moments, offering not just professional expertise but genuine care and understanding. He has provided solace to those grieving, ensuring that every farewell Honors the life and legacy of those who have passed. His work is more than a profession—it is a calling, one he has answered with grace, humility, and an unshakable sense of duty.

James's impact extends far beyond the walls of the funeral home. In the Virgin Islands, where community is the heartbeat of our culture, he has been a steady presence, a listener, and a friend to so many. Through his humor, kind words, willingness to lend a helping hand, or simply being there when words are not enough, James has woven himself into the fabric of the islands. His respect for traditions, his deep connection to the people, and his ability to bring comfort in times of sorrow have made him a trusted figure during one of the most difficult times one could face.

To know James is to know a man of integrity, warmth, and quiet strength. He carries the stories of our community in his heart, treating every family he serves as if they were his own. His work has not only honored those who have passed but has also uplifted the living, reminding us of the power of compassion and the importance of coming together in times of loss.

It feels like it was just last year when my cousin Lyle and I visited him in the Virgin Islands for one of our spring or summer high school vacations. Our uncle would engage with us about our interest and how important it is to figure out what we would like to do when we complete high school.

He expressed his interest in the noble profession of funeral service along with a quite compelling reason of why we shouldn't fear the dead or death. It was in that moment or shortly there after that my cousin and I decided that we too would attend mortuary school one day and upon completion of high school we did. Lyle and myself are licensed in New York State where he still serves with dignity. His niece, Lyle's sister Maxine also found her way to our Alma mater AAMI where I happened to be employed as a clinical embalming adjunct professor at the time. She completed her education and currently works here in the USVI at the medical examiners office. Lately my focus has been on my artist entrepreneurial endeavors and funeral education and the positive impact our uncle has had on our lives still echoes in a meaningful manner. On behalf of my family, I want to express our deep pride in Uncle James and our gratitude to the Virgin Islands for recognizing his service. Thank you for entrusting him with your stories, your loved ones, and your memories and to James, my uncle, my brother in service, my friend. Thank you for being a beacon of light, a source of comfort, and a resource to your sibling's and deceased parents Claris Sasso and Edmund

Sasso who I know would be beaming with pride today and last but not least for being an example of what it means to serve with love.

May we all continue to Honor your legacy by carrying forward the same spirit of kindness and community that you embody every day. Congratulations, James Sasso, on this well-deserved recognition. The Virgin Islands are stronger, kinder, and more connected because of you.

Love,

Jelani Sasso

Artist | Educator | Licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer