

Eight Mile Rock Constituency in the General Elections
Lynden Pindling Center, Nassau Bahamas May 26th 2011

Mr. Leader, Rt. Hon. Perry Christie

Mr. Deputy Leader

Mr. Chairman

Parliamentarians

Candidates Stalwart Councilors

Secretary General Mrs. Barbara Pierre

Asst. Sect. General Michelle Reckley

Candidates Committee

Senior Party Officials

PLP's, my Grand Bahama family

My wife dear wife Janice the love of my life

Ladies and Gentlemen good evening

I stand here this evening as a proud native son of the large and diverse community of Eight Mile Rock, Grand Bahama, the place of my birth and the place where my family still resides in large measure. My roots are deeply entrenched in this community and no matter where I go in this world; Eight Mile Rock will always be home to me.

When I was approached several months ago to consider this opportunity to serve, I gave it much thought, much prayer and self-reflection. I did not take this decision lightly, and though my journey to this point has not been as long as others, I am confident and believe that my steps are ordered and I am exactly where I am supposed to be.

Many persons have asked me why I want to become involved in politics, especially at a time like this. Some have even said, "You're just a nice guy, but you're no politician".

My answer to this is simple. "Yes, I am a nice guy, and no I'm not a politician yet, but I do believe that I have something to offer, and even a blind man could see that we are going in the wrong direction and we need change in our country.

Let me tell you a little about myself. I was born to the Rev. Dr. Ralph Russell and the late Louise Russell (nee) Pinder in the settlement of Russell Town, Eight Mile Rock Grand Bahama on March 1, 1955. I attended Catholic School in Freeport, Grand Bahama, and then attended St. Augustine's College in Nassau, Bahamas, where I graduated in 1972. After high school, I enrolled in Elizabeth City State University, Elizabeth City, North Carolina, where I majored in Business Administration, with a concentration in Accounting, graduating in 1977 with a Bachelor of Science Degree. Upon completion of college, I returned to the Bahamas, where I was employed at Price Waterhouse, now PricewaterhouseCoopers in various capacities. In 1982, I became the first Grand Bahamian to qualify as a Certified Public Accountant.

I am married to the former Janice Culmer and we have three beautiful children.

There comes a time in all of our lives when we need to look at ourselves in the mirror, and recognize that we have to stop waiting for someone else to do something to make a difference in the lives of others. We need to become the change that we want to see. Whether we believe it or not, all of us here this evening have a purpose or calling on our lives. We may not know what that is, but we all in our own unique and special way, can contribute something to make a difference in our country, to make a difference in the lives of our people and as result bring about the change that we so desperately need.

Right now on Grand Bahama Island, the home of the once "Magic City", the door of opportunity for Bahamians seems to be closing all around us. There are many families who are experiencing intense hardship, frustration and suffering, due to the continuous loss of jobs, the lack of other job opportunities; and businesses closing all around us every day. There is a general feeling that nobody cares, or feels our pain.

The Eight Mile Rock Constituency has not escaped the pain and suffering. The people of this large and diverse constituency are some of the strongest people I know, and have endured many challenges over the years, but still they stand resilient. Every day, I see the faces of young people in this community, particularly young men, filled with hopelessness and despair, sitting on the blocks passing the time away, because there's nothing else to do. I see the faces of older people, who are distressed, who are unable to work anymore to make ends meet, and who have to depend on the small monetary support of National Insurance on a monthly basis, or other family members who too may be struggling.

The people of Eight Mile Rock, Pinder's Point, Lewis Yard, Hunters, Mack Town, Hawksbill, Queen's Cove and Bahamia, we all need help. We need leadership and representation that is caring and compassionate. Leadership that hears the cries of our people and does not close their eyes to what's going on all around us.

We need to put Bahamians first once again in our country. We need to become our brothers' keeper once again. We need to practice the age old belief that "to whom much is given, much is required".

The people of the Eight Rock Constituency will always be special to me and hold a special place in my heart, because I know who they are and I know all that they can be.

My vision for the EMR constituency pure and simple is one of continuous improvement:

- **To instill confidence, purpose and pride in all our people, particularly young people who are seeking guidance, encouragement and a listening ear.**
- **To secure and create job opportunities – full employment for all.**
- **Promote a safe and healthy community.**
- **An educated, well informed community. (Encouraging all that education is the key to the world, to believe in oneself, and to know that where you are now, does not determine where you can be).**
- **Everybody positively participating in the building of our community. (Community Service for the young)**
- **Improved infrastructure and a cleaner environment.**
- **Activity Centers for the young, the young at heart and our visitors.**
- **Business/Town Center.**

I do not have any illusions about the challenges that lie ahead, for they are large, and they are many.

But I believe that at such a time as this, the Eight Mile Rock constituency needs a Representative who knows this community, who understands who we are, someone we can reach out and touch, who feels our pain and hurt and who will work hard every day to help and make our lives better.

Tonight, I am privileged and indeed humbled to stand here to formally accept the nomination of the Progressive Liberal Party, to be its candidate for the great constituency of Eight Mile Rock, in the upcoming General Election.

I believe with the help of Almighty God, your support and the prayers of all who desire Change in a new direction, we will be victorious.

I express my thanks and gratitude to the Rt. Hon. Perry Christie and the Progressive Liberal Party, for the confidence you have shown in me, to my family and the great people of the Eight Mile Rock Constituency for their continuous support and prayers.

Thank you and May God Bless You All! PLP all the way