

June 14, 2013

Your Country needs you, Speaker tells graduates

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Speaker of the House of Assembly, the Hon. Dr. Kendal Major told a group of young men and woman Thursday, June 13, that they are the agent of change and that this young Bahamaland needs them.

Dr. Major was in Grand Bahama as the special guest speaker for the Sunland Baptist Academy class of 2013 commencement exercise.

He told the graduating class and the large audience attending the function at St. John's Jubilee Cathedral on Settlers Way, Freeport that he is the 8th Speaker in an Independent Bahamas, and the 54th Speaker since the inception of Parliamentary democracy in 1729.

Also, that he serves as the third youngest Speaker and the first Dentist to sit in the Chair as Speaker.

"You should know that all these accolades are reasons to be proud, and I am. However, what gives me tremendous satisfaction is firstly, my appreciation for a sound education for all; secondly, the importance of capturing a vision for my life; and thirdly and most importantly a realisation that after many mistakes, I reconnected to the God of my ancestors," he stated.

The House Speaker told the gathering that the great American abolitionist, freedom fighter and advisor to American Presidents Frederick Douglas once said, "*It is easier to build children than to repair broken men.*"

"What a profound statement? So simple! Yet so true! You see building children towards a solid foundation, by teaching and nurturing them with principles that move their lives forward signifies why we are all here tonight.

In doing this we give them and by extension all of us meaning when we invest in the future of young people," he said.

Dr. Major also told the graduates that whatever they do and where ever they go they will be

judged by these two words - **Personal Responsibility**.

“For it will determine the direction of your lives as you move forward. You have spent the last several years in an environment of preparation and profound growth. Along the way you were nudged to stay the course by a little punishment here and there. Some of you received demerits, detentions and maybe even suspensions. In going forward these do not exist. For serious bouts of indiscretion there is jail. It is as simple and as blunt as this. So from this day forward you must make it count,” he said.

The Speaker added that being the parent of a teenage son who recently graduated, and a 23 year old daughter who is a University graduate that he is sensitive to the challenges facing the young people of our day.

He pointed out that one of the most vexing issues that parents face with their children is balancing this need to expose them to the latest technology yet trying to protect them from some of its pitfalls.

“One such technology is **texting** yet alternatively in this world we live in this could be abused by something referred to as **sexting**, forwarding explicit photos to a significant other during happy times. When things turn sour these same pictures are used to destroy your reputation, dangerous.

“To this end I admonish graduates as you move forward to be very careful and use technology to fulfil your educational goals but be ever mindful of the excesses and corrupting influence they can create.

“So take a break from Facebook every now and then and get face to face. Stop tweeting about how you feel but rather tweet about how God thinks. Leave MySpace and find your space at the dinner table. And last but not least, make sure your email addresses are not names like sweetsugar at hotmail.com or junglenasty at gmail.com,” he cautioned.

He reminded them that as they graduate they join 5000 other young adults in the country seeking opportunities to be gainfully employed, start a business, enroll in the College of The Bahamas, train as an apprentice or seeking university abroad.

“I am comforted that you are well prepared. Your foundations are solid. It’s now up to you. You must stand strong and move forward,” he stated.

Sharing some further thoughts on education, Dr. Major told the assembly that education teaches us how to think and is the single best predictor of a higher quality of life.

“Education moves you from the out-house to the white house, from outside toilets to the office of Prime Minister, from poverty to wealth. A biblically sound education expands your faith and teaches you wonderful things about you.

“On the other hand an uneducated person is often confused and misunderstood. You see today there are many restless young males and some females who walk around in bagging pants almost at their knees whose classroom is the peer pressure of the gang.

“He is driven by ego, communicates by grunts and fits of anger and roams our streets like packs of animals looking to devour the weak. We have failed these young men and only the right education in an environment of structure and order can deliver all of us all from this gaping wound,” he said.

Continuing Dr. Major said that he must pause and thank God that his parents who never enjoyed the educational privileges he had, yet they were determined to prepare a table before him called opportunity.

“It was up to me to partake of the meal. Parents, when you educate your children your lives will improve and their potential will be expanded and their purpose becomes clearer. Nurturing your children gives them an intangible gift that no man can put asunder.

“You have done well and I salute you tonight. Continue to pray for them and encourage them. I am sure the graduates would not mind me saying to you to continue to give them couple dollars however you must let them go to discover themselves,” he added.

He also had a message for teachers, saying that in humble opinion their leadership represents the unsung heroes of our land, and that they teach with passion and purpose imparting principles that will last forever.

The House Speaker recalled that one of his teachers from high school, who was a strict disciplinarian, often challenged and even scolded him during his tenure as a student.

“Well, some 39 years after his class he has become a patient in my practice. Just imagine. My former teacher is now submitting to my care as his doctor. What great pride we both feel as we sit and reminisce of the good days of the past.

“I believe this story signifies how the power of passion and the influence of a good teacher can change the world. So teachers, when you teach you not only close the prison doors you secure the future that makes this world a better place,” he said.

Continuing in his remarks to the graduates he told them that their quest for education should not just be about being smart and getting good grades although that is admirable.

“You see not all persons can graduate summa cum laude or magna cum laude. I submit to you that many outstanding personalities of our world and our Bahamas graduated thank you laude. We must also celebrate those of you who but by the grace of God said thank you Lord.

Fellow graduates, good attitude will take you further than just good grades will ever do. So pursue goodness, keep your motives pure and allow the Maker of your life to guide you into who you were born to be. Trust me, you will make a difference,” he said.

Dr. Major questioned the graduates on whether they want a great reason to get up every morning?

“Then have a plan and a vision for your life. This is the power of vision. It’s a blue print of your goals and aspirations. It is an image of a preferred future.

“Vision gives you a clear glimpse of what you were born to do. It empowers you and the people around you. It’s an extension of you. It shows you what’s possible and it exposes your potential. It manages your actions and prioritises your life. Your decisions are much clearer when you have a vision,” the Speaker said.

He went on to caution graduates telling them do not attempt to be like mummy, daddy or anybody else, and they should learn from them but be themselves and serve their gifts to the world, otherwise they will forever be unhappy and unfulfilled.

He went on to tell the following story:

“At 10 years old a young boy had a vision. It was dim but he had an idea. He was attracted to the sciences. He was good at sports with good hand eye coordination. He loved people and was sociable. He demonstrated leadership skills in small groups however there was one problem that paralyzed him. He would rather die before he stood and speak in front of a crowd.

”Well fellow graduates, the story continues. The young boy’s name is Daniel. His story represents so many young Bahamians today and I believe it encapsulates tonight’s message.

Daniel at an early age had some behavioral and resulting academic problems. Some people said he would not amount to nothing much. He was relatively a decent kid, full of potential yet mischievous.

One day after placing 33rd in a class of 36 students he decided to take matters into his own hands. He opened his report card and erased one of the 3s. So in essence, he came 3rd in the depths of own mind. His parents of course were not amused. They figured out the deceit and selfishness. The result I am told was catastrophic.

“Daniel survived and reached the age of 15 when he went to the beach with his father. It seems by fate he had an interesting encounter with the Prime Minister at the time in 1975-Lynden Oscar Pindling.

“The Prime Minister saw his father at a distance and asked his plans for his son after high school. “*He wants to become a Veterinarian.*” Sir Lynden smiled and then advised to apply for a scholarship; one he said was designed for students interested in Agriculture or Veterinary Medicine.

“Daniel applied and received a 2-year City Market Scholarship. Daniel was relieved. He was the first in his family to go to University yet he didn’t quite get the big picture - what an opportunity like that really meant. Some twelve years later Daniel returned home and began to work.

“Another 8 years passed and now some 20 years after that visit at the beach, the young professional, who never became a Veterinarian but instead a qualified doctor serving as the first specialist of his kind, receives a phone call from the then former Prime Minister for an appointment as a patient.

“It was during that appointment where the full impact of the Scholarship became clear when Sir Lynden (regarded as the father of our nation) affirmed, “*The vision of Nation Building must continue, and young men like you Dr. Daniel must find your place in this country and move the vision forward.*” He continued, “*There is much more work to be done.*”

“Sunland graduates, at this point you may be asking the question, who is Daniel or you may have figured it out by now. The truth is I was the Daniel at the beach and I am Dr. Daniel, that young professional who benefited from the opportunity for higher education, then stirred by the revelation of Sir Lynden’s words.

“I stand here tonight inspired and impassioned to tell you that you too must discover yourself and seek to build this country that has given you so much. You are the next generational agents of change this young nation needs. It’s up to you now to take the moral responsibility and chart a new course.

Fellow graduates, our country needs you and so does the world. We all await your contribution to true nation building. So reach out with courage, pursue wisdom, be inspired and grasp the

mandate intended for you because the rest of your lives really begin today,” he stated.