

**Remarks by Fred Mitchell MP
Minister Of Foreign Affairs
Nelson Mandela Day
18th July 2012**

It's my pleasure to be here. It's a privilege to be here really. I was surprised by this invitation. It was a pleasant surprise. But it is always a joy to be around young people. I will tell you a story. When I was your age, my parents used to take me around with my brothers and sisters to see my aunts, none of whom had any children. I used to think of it as a miserable experience. I would think to myself, not again. But each Sunday we would go over and while we played, they would keep saying to us: sit still, stand up straight, get down from there, don't let me have to speak to you twice and the best one: don't let me have to come over there.

I used to think why would they want us to come around them, if they are so miserable and we are always doing something wrong.

The years have long passed and they have all sadly passed away but my memories of being with them are now more pleasant. Despite their correcting us, they really loved us and enjoyed us being around. Young people are full of joy and energy and being around young people lifts your spirits.

You will one day learn the expression: oh to be young again.

Today is Nelson Mandela's 94th birthday. Happy Birthday Madiba. Let's all say together happy birthday Madiba.

I met Nelson Mandela in 1993 when I represented The Bahamas as a Commonwealth Observer. I spent six weeks in Johannesburg and spent many days watching him work. He is a great man. He did well for his country and his people. He was in prison for 27 years yet he forgave his captors and went on to become President of his country.

And what I like and admire most about him as a politician is that he knew when it was time to go. Lesson number one is do not overstay your time on the public stage. When it is time to go, say farewell and leave the stage.

Today, then we pay tribute to Nelson Mandela. Shortly, after he was let out of prison, he came to The Bahamas and thanked the late Sir Lynden O. Pindling, the father of our nation for his help in getting Mr. Mandela out of prison. During his stay Mr. Mandela lived in Lyford Cay.

What can you do today to commemorate Mr. Mandela and his work? I read about a programme called adopt a grandparent. You can do this. Remember I said, older people like to have young people around them. It is a great joy. So why don't you think about adopting a grandparent or give your own grandparent the special treat of your company. Just your company would be a treat. You can:

1. Assist them with a visit to the hospital or pharmacy or to church

2. Assist them with a trip to the food store
 3. Help them wash the dishes or throw out the trash.
 - 2.
 4. Read them a story or watch a movie with them
 5. Take a visit to an old folk's home and carry some food or books.
- Nelson Mandela said this:

“I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.”

Happy Birthday Madiba.

Thank you.