

**Remarks Unveiling of Refurbished Plaque  
Conference Corner, Blake Road and West Bay Street  
Your excellency, Prime Minister, Cabinet and Parliamentary  
Colleagues, The Leader of the Opposition, Excellences, ladies and  
gentlemen.**

This is both a personal journey and a story of public policy.

The personal journey first: When the events that we mark today took place, I was nine years old. It is in fact my earliest recollection of my passion for politics and public policy. I was a student in the then Eastern Junior School, now known as Palmdale Primary, and each day I would walk to school from my parents' home in Collins Avenue. On the way there I would pass through Carew Street and my closest primary school friend the now Dr. Austin Davis and I would walk to school together and talk about the events of the day. I remember one morning as we walked to school we talked about what later became known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Bahamas was near the epicenter of those events because as we walked to school US planes were flying in the skies high overhead.

I called Dr. Davis yesterday and asked him if he could come today and if in fact my recollection was correct. He is unfortunately travelling on a family vacation but he remembers the events and the planting of the tree by the US President. So it gave me comfort that I did not invent the story

We and a whole cohort of young men and women were raised in the age of John F. Kennedy, with our early beliefs formed in the crucible of a youthful American president and the words he said. Later I would learn his inaugural speech of 1960 at St Augustine's College with the words "ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country".

I am of that generation that remembers where they were the day, the President was shot and died in Dallas, Texas.

Later still, I was a student at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, where the words of the late President are penned at the gate:

Now the public policy. Each month the diplomats of The Bahamas and those of the United States of America meet at a monthly working luncheon. The idea for refurbishing this site was first put to the Embassy as a joint project back in August of this year, as a symbol of the close cooperation between the two countries.

John Dinkelman, the Charge D'Affaires immediately agreed and found resources for the joint project. I wish to pay tribute to him and the embassy staff for their assistance in making this event possible today.

It was in that forum that I proposed this larger theme that this event which happened fifty years ago was one of a number of events that put the country for a brief moment in time at the center of the news of the world.

I posited that as an amateur historian of our country's policies of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, and looking toward the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the country's independence, that part of the retrospective on who we are should look and examine those events which put us at the center of international life.

One event was the fact that the former King of England and Emperor of India David Windsor abdicated and then came to The Bahamas as Governor in 1940 and stayed here until 1945. During that time Sir Harry Oakes, reportedly the richest man in the Empire, lived here and was murdered here on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1943. The murder was never solved and next year will be the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that murder.

It would be an interesting time to look back and examine the kind of Bahamas we had in the age just before I was born and just before the advent of the era of party politics in The Bahamas.

It was during that time that the Burma Road Riots of 1942 took place that changed the social face of our country. We are sitting at the end of Burma Road as we speak today.

I think we ought to do a symposium on that period as part of our observances on our 40<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary next year.

Another time that we were at the centre of events was when the deposed Shah of Iran ended up living in The Bahamas at Paradise Island for three months while he looked for a permanent home. The then Secretary of State for the U.S. Henry Kissinger, who now vacations in The Bahamas annually, called the late Sir Lynden Pindling, Prime Minister at the time in 1979, and asked if the ally and friend of the U.S., the Shah could live here for that time. It was not universally accepted and there were demonstrations in town about it. But there was a palpable excitement.

There are other social events like Sidney Poitier winning the Oscar in 1963. He was Reginald Poitier's boy from Cat Island. The Beatles vacationing in Nassau and Sean Connery, then the star of the James Bond films choosing Nassau as his hang out and it is now too his permanent home.

Also, US Representative from the Harlem District Adam Clayton Powell visited Bimini frequently and lived there and Dr. Martin Luther King wrote his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in the Marshes of Bimini in 1964.

All of these events helped to shape who and what we are as a country today. The mix of descendants of Africa; some brought here as slaves; others as artisans from the West Indies; others set down as liberated Africans; others fleeing the poverty of Haiti together with the Europeans who settled here; the Americans who fled their country after the revolution and the wealthy who came here in the 20th century to protect their wealth and enjoy the climate and to live in privacy. That is part of what The Bahamas is in our 40<sup>th</sup> year.

The final point: An even larger theme. Let me remind all of us that we pass this country on to another generation. It took me 50 years from those days I walked to school at Eastern Junior to reach this platform. Clearly at nine years old, the ideas about who and what I was, and what I would be were forming at that age. It is counterintuitive to suggest that the same is not going on with nine year olds today. It is, I hope, a lesson to all who have the good fortune of being parents and to those of us who govern, that young people form their ideas from early. It is therefore never too soon to help those ideas for the positive and for the good.

I trust then that the message will go out from this place that our job is to help to train the next generation, to pass on to them a country of liberal democratic values, of tolerance and of social mobility.

One of our founding fathers is here today in the person of our Governor General. He and his generation inspired us; I hope that we in this time are fortunate enough to so inspire the next group that comes along. In fact I am certain of it as I pen and speak these words.

I thank in that connection the young Foreign Services officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Museum and Antiquities Corporation, its Chairman Courtney Strachan and our own Permanent Secretary Philip Miller for their invaluable assistance and dedication to making this day a success.

I wish to thank also my dear friend Sybilla Clarke who as a resident of The Bahamas since the 1950s; was able to recall the social history of this event and was always a phone call away when I wanted to check something that was not in the history books.

Thank you all very much indeed.

End