

Remarks by Fred Mitchell MP

Fox Hill

Groundbreaking for the four people killed 27th December 2013

Thank you all for coming to this solemn occasion.

We are on a burial ground. History records that this Freedom Park was originally a burial ground donated by Judge Robert Sandilands for the use of the good citizens of Fox Hill.

It was the late Carlton Francis, the last representative of this constituency before it was called Fox Hill who on the old burial ground created Freedom Park. That was on New Year's Eve 1967.

Life has lots of interesting coincidences: December was when four young people lost their lives here on Freedom Park, given to the people of Fox Hill in the modern era to mark the freedom from slavery. They were tragically shot down on Freedom Park and it became once again a burial ground.

That irony of life, where freedom has led to death and the reincarnation of a burial ground. It is sad beyond measure.

Once I heard the news, I returned home immediately to be with my friends and family.

Today, I am pleased to welcome our Deputy Prime Minister to be with us this evening, together with the people of this village to begin the process of honouring those four people who died on that day. I salute Claudzino Davis, Shanique Sands, Eric Morrison, Shaquille Demeritte.

This memorial today will be part of the healing process I hope. It is a way to remember your friends and family. They have left us but we hope and pray that they are in a better place, where their neither pain or suffering or sorrow nor death and dying. They are forever young.

I had just landed in Los Angeles and was in a supermarket when my phone began to ring incessantly. I tried to ignore it but could not. I was there for four days to visit with my friend Sidney Poitier. But the phone kept ringing. I answered the phone. The phone call was disastrous news. Bodies were on Freedom Park. Someone, some persons unknown had come and prayed the park with gunfire and killed four of Fox Hill's finest.

One young man had left his mother to go find Chinese food his favourite. He ends up dead on the park.

Three others were simply here awaiting the Junkanoo results of the Original Congoes. The Congoes who so magnificently entertained us and lifted our spirits on Emancipation morning to the sound of the Congo drums and the cowbells.

I wish to thank again Trevor Pratt and Warren Davis for their leadership of the scouts and of the Junkanoo group. I thank Maurice Tynes and the indefatigable members of the Fox Hill Festival Committee; our Pastors,

Derek and Janet Davis, and all the Committee members of the Fox Hill Festival Committee for making this all possible. I thank Clinton Pearce who designed the memorial. It is expected to be built by a local contractor and we are working on the figures now.

BTC the telephone company has also expressed an interest in helping to assist in the further development of this memorial.

We are building and maintaining a community here. I was speaking to the MP for Bain and Grants Town about community and he was speaking about the leadership in Fox Hill. I am pleased that others see what we do to build and maintain community. It is hard work. It has to be every day and we have to keep at it.

So today we start another chapter in Freedom Park, the old burial ground has a new use, in the modern era. It is a memorial to four wonderful people, four great Fox Hillians. I pray that we will always remember them.

I know that they will always live on in our hearts.

God bless you all. The village of Fox Hill and the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.