

## **Bahamas Pride Freedom Weekend: The Aftermath**

Sunday, August 31st, 2014- Freeport, The Bahamas. As Bahamas Pride Freedom Weekend comes to a close, we would like to thank the city of Freeport for superb hospitality and respect.

Bahamas Pride Freedom Weekend was not designed to be the largest gathering of LGBT Bahamians, it was not conceived to push any political agenda and it was certainly not strategically planned to disrespect, segregate or harm any community or the population. The overarching goal of the event is to stand together and celebrate all that the LGBT Bahamian community has conquered and achieved despite all the negativity cultivated within and towards this specific minority.

The successes of the event lie in the hearts and minds of the planning committee who simply wanted to revive Pride within the community. The community activists from all aspects of the rainbow spectrum weighed in and supported the event through pride statements, logistical advice, blog statements and general wholehearted support. Among the early arrivals were acclaimed LGBT power couple, Human Rights Attorney Maurice Tomlinson and husband Tom Decker, of Toronto, Canada. Fully equipped with pride flags, they came and offered significant insight on a variety of topics from community building and sensitivity training for law enforcement agencies to human rights and how it is important to uplift our Caribbean brothers and sisters who are all faced with the same struggles.

The attendance of the event was significantly disappointing as a mere 3 local LGBT individuals attended. 5 international LGBTs and 3 allies. The allies in attendance were baffled at the no show of the Bahamian LGBT community noting that "despite the radio shows and social media chaos, everything was structured, organized and very accommodating." The planning committee on the ground in Grand Bahama decided to trim down many of the planned events

including the Health Fair and Forum sponsored by SASH Bahamas, which allowed the small group to thoroughly enjoy the festive atmosphere and exciting activities the resort provides. Wearing rainbow armbands, adorning rainbow flags on doors and balconies, the small group made their presence known without disturbing or disgruntling any of the other private guests of the resort even when they were on parade along the beach. Co-chair of the Planning Committee, Mr. Victor Rollins commented, "The day before the event and even the day of the event, the negativity surrounding the event were shameful. We are to be a nation of freedom and free will, we are not placed here to hate or be hated. Our mission was to facilitate an event for the LGBT community to gather and celebrate the uniqueness of the population and that mission was achieved."

The awardees of the various awards were not in attendance for an awards presentation; however the guests received certificates of appreciation from Amard Rolle, Executive Director of SASH Bahamas who also led the small group to gather near the beach to offer up a moment of prayer and silence for the community, the country, those who lost their lives to hate crimes and HIV and for the future protection of civil liberties.

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