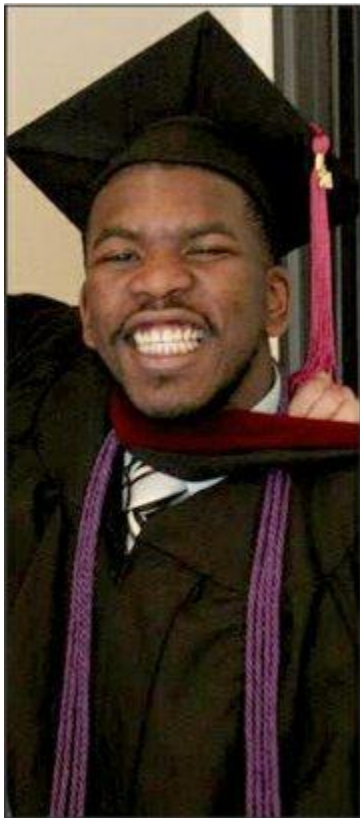


By KORTNEY RODGERS

A REPORT in The Tribune's Business section earlier this year said that almost two-thirds of college and university-educated Bahamians have moved abroad to seek jobs in developed countries, costing the nation a sum equivalent to 4.4 per cent of its annual gross domestic product.

This so-called "brain drain" focuses on the impending reality that the country is losing more than half of its highly trained or qualified Bahamians to countries that are a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).

Two tertiary-educated Bahamians who have chosen to remain in the United States rather than return home after completing their studies abroad told The Tribune why they have made their decisions.

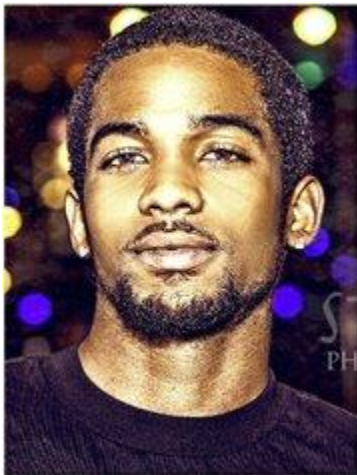


Ethon Bullard

Ethon Bullard, 26, who has lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for nearly a decade, said he viewed studying abroad as a “once in a lifetime experience” and chose to stay because of greater opportunities.

“The Bahamas has a lot to offer, but the country and its people have not fully tapped into their resources,” he said. “However, in the States full advantage is taken in terms of oil and natural gas, the different stock exchanges to sell and buy stocks, competition in different industries to reduce monopolies, and food and products are cheaper, so more money is able to be saved and used for enjoyment.”

#As a graduate of Oral Roberts University with a double major in Business Administration and Interpersonal Communication and double minor in Humanities and Education, Mr. Bullard said he prefers living in the US where he can put all of his acquired knowledge to use by holding down three jobs and gaining different experiences in a diverse culture.



Nicholas Swaby

Nicholas Swaby, 22, who has lived in the US for seven years after receiving multiple sports scholarships, prefers living abroad because of “better educational opportunities, a nicer living experience and more opportunities to network”.

As a student at Broward College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, by day and as a music artist by night, Mr. Swaby said that although he loves his country, it has become more and more unsafe in recent years noting “100 and some plus murders a year and murders now taking place in broad daylight,” which seems to him to suggest that Bahamians are becoming immune to crime. He also feels that the US is a better place to establish his music career.

“There is a possibility of moving back home, but I’m in no hurry,” Mr. Swaby said. “In the US I have met many million-dollar producers, signed rappers, managers, big DJs, you name it. Americans show a lot of support. Bahamians tend to drag down their own before supporting them.”

Both men agreed that their decision to remain abroad has contributed to the brain drain in the Bahamian society and suggested that there are many other Bahamians where they reside who have chosen to remain abroad for similar reasons.

“Yes, I do believe I contribute to the brain drain because my decision reduces the amount of individuals with special knowledge or skills that can enhance the country,” Mr. Bullard said. “The problem is that people tend to be narrow-minded or stuck in their ways and do not encourage change or believe in it.

“Every time I go home I see the need for the skills I have to offer, but I refuse to give my life or skills to a country or government that will not do the same. If I do not consider myself FNM or PLP, who will care?”

Mr. Swaby said: “I believe that I must better myself before I can help my country and when that period of my life is completed, I would have bettered my skills to contribute to the society with my talents.” He noted that in order for him to become more eager to return home, he would like to see a decrease in the murder rate and “an improved

music scene” because there are a lot of talented Bahamians interested in pursuing a career in music. Mr. Bullard, however, would like more diversity regarding the professions of those in parliament, less government reliance from Bahamians and more equal opportunities.

“Instead of the majority of lawyers in the government, diversify it with economists, engineers, teachers, bankers, nutritionists, doctors; there needs to be every type of career in government to help build the country and make it better,” Mr. Bullard said.

In accordance with the study, “Is there a Caribbean Sclerosis”, on which The Tribune Business article was based, it “effectively suggests that this nation is losing its ‘best and brightest’ minds to other economies”.