

Commonwealth of the Bahamas

Independence Message 2014

Dr. the Hon. Hubert Minnis

Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition

on the 41st Anniversary of Independence

10 July 2014

Forty One years ago, at the hour of midnight, the Union Jack, the symbol of British Colonialism, was lowered for the final time in our country. In its place, was raised, the gold, aquamarine and black flag of a free and independent Bahamas.

The dream of equality, freedom and fair play for every citizen of this country, of whatever sexual gender, race, creed or colour, began in my father's generation, in the hearts of men like R.M Bailey, S.C. McPherson, L. Walton Young, A. Leon McKinney, Charles Rodriguez, Dr. Claudius Roland Walker, Bert Cambridge; and women like Mabel Walker, Georgiana Symonette and Mary Ingraham.

This dream was fulfilled on July 10th 1973, through the determined, selfless and untiring efforts of men like Sir Lynden Oscar Pindling, Sir Randolph Fawkes, Sir Arthur Dion Hanna, Sir Cecil Wallace-Whitfield, Sir Clement T. Maynard, Sir Arthur Alexander Foulkes, Curtis McMillan, James Shepherd, Garnett Levarity, Paul Lawrence Adderley and Geoffrey Thompson and so many others. These men, and women like Dame Doris Johnson, are all true heroes of Bahamian Independence.

President John F. Kennedy said it well over fifty years ago at his Inauguration, when he observed that "the torch has now passed to a new generation...". It is now the time for the new generation of Bahamian leaders to take up the torch, and to advance the dream. Such an undertaking is not easy, for while we enjoy greater political, social and economic opportunities than the previous generation could only imagine, there is still much work to be done to ensure that more and more Bahamians come to enjoy the full fruits of Nationhood, civic participation and greater ownership in the Bahamian economy.

The opportunities and prosperity afforded to some Bahamians have made too many persons cynical and less caring for the underprivileged and the disadvantaged; but this can be changed.

We can change social attitudes because, deep down inside, Bahamians are a kind, caring and decent people who value hard work, honesty and decency.

We are blessed by God and nature: simply look around you. Our country has achieved a peaceful and stable democracy for nearly 300 years. Our waters and vast wetlands and creeks teem with marine life. Our people, and new generations of entrepreneurs, are pushing the boundaries of further economic growth and national development. The creative talents and energies of our Artists and Musicians are reemphasizing and redefining our distinctive Bahamian identity. We remain, despite our smaller population, a regional and world sporting power. There is much of which we can and should be proud; and so much more that we can achieve by a continued commitment to our Constitutional creed of “self-discipline, industry, loyalty, unity and an abiding respect for Christian values and the Rule of Law”.

As we celebrate this 41st year of Independence of The Bahamas as a free and sovereign nation, let us all give God our praise in thanksgiving services across this land. May we all have a safe and happy Independence Holiday.

May God bless and preserve our Nation, and all who live herein.