

A Modest Proposal towards a Truer Emancipation and a Truer  
Independence,

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The Keva Marie Bethel Distinguished Lecture

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Every year in The Bahamas we support significant celebrations of two versions of liberty—Emancipation Day and Independence Day and, indeed, we have much to celebrate. Few countries have emerged from a culture of bondage, whether based on race or ethnicity, without that emergence being underwritten by ethnic cleansing, genocide, holocaust, or whatever expressions we employ in the effort to contain the horror of mass bloodletting. The Bahamas can celebrate the fact that its people threw off the chains of slavery without bloodshed and the descendants of the enslaved and the masters have lived in remarkable peace since then.

Similarly, few of the sovereign nations that arose from the sunset of the British Empire can claim an emergence from colonial bondage that was not attended by armed conflict and, in some cases, horrific human rights abuses and subsequent, periodic outbursts of unrest as the newly liberated struggled to come to terms with freedom and leadership. Many former colonial subjects learned, to their cost, that new oppression often follows closely on the heels of the purported liberation. The only difference between oppressors was that the new ones tended to share phenotype with the re-enslaved.

In The Bahamas, the bloodier chapters of decolonization have not been our experience to date; but then, decolonization, first cousin of emancipation and independence, is also a process and one of long duration.

In celebration of our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence, this country took on an air of the belle époque, which characterized European societies, especially those of France and Austria, between 1871 and 1914. It has been fertile period bringing an outpouring of art exhibitions, musical concerts, new book launches, award presentations, a plethora of sporting events, junkanoo and general revelry.

There was a darker aspect to this brief moment of splendor that we enjoyed. Beneath all the gaiety were growing cancers of mistrust, increasing poverty, mushrooming crime, greed for wealth and power and twisted obligations imposed by political affiliations, which are rupturing the peace of The Bahamas and dangerously impeding national progress. The contention of this presentation is that, in this second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Bahamians are not truly free and neither is The Bahamas truly independent, despite our three constitutions and various amendments; despite all the documentation filled with words signaling autonomy and self-direction.

While Britain's Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 conferred legal freedom to enslaved Bahamians, laws, no matter how well-intentioned, are only as good as their acceptance, interpretation and enforcement. Although the chafing of iron chains and the cutting of the whip were removed, the Act could not remove the bondage of racial, political and economic discrimination and the political, legal and pseudo-Christian machinations that supported them. Those who held the economic and governmental reins in our islands did not give sufficient practical substance to the intent of the law. As a result, up to the 1960s, any real progress in education and enfranchisement, the main pillars of liberty, came only with the periodic interventions of the imperial power. This

country attained universal suffrage only in 1961 and equitable majority representation only in 1967, 127 and 133 years, respectively, after the Abolition Act became effective in 1834.

What took place forty years ago in July 1973 was a purchase at a fire sale, not independence. The British Empire was burning down and, no doubt, it seemed propitious to let go of unprofitable territories before disengagement became costly in terms of lives and property, as it had in India and the African colonies. It was a *nunc dimittis* we celebrated on July 10, 1973, not independence. It would have been entirely in keeping with the true import of the occasion, if The Bahamas' first prime minister, Lynden Pindling had repeated Simeon's Canticle to Prince Charles, who represented the British Monarchy: "Ruler of all, now dost thou let thy servant go in peace, according to thy word."

Our new flag and the instruments of sovereignty that Prince Charles delivered to Lynden Pindling indicated to the world our right to pursue national independence and popular freedom. Independence and the Independence Constitution were twin infants—Babes to be loved, nourished, to be guided and shaped, to have their nappies changed when soiled, to be corrected when straying from the path of righteousness.

Although emancipation/freedom and independence are often conflated in writing and speech, they are not synonymous and not represented as such for the purposes of this presentation. A wise monk expressed what seems to be a conundrum—Many people who are independent are not free, and many who are dependent are free.

With his clarification, the truth of his statement is unmistakable:

Independence refers to an external situation and is associated with the word liberty. A person in jail is not at liberty. But freedom is an interior condition. One who is free is able to act by norms personally decided on and internalized. A person in prison may not be at liberty but still be free: for example, St. Paul, St. Thomas More, Henry David Thoreau, Nelson Mandela. People not able to decide on a system of beliefs or, if having decided, not able to live according to it, is not free, however rich, powerful, or independent they may be. (1)

It is one of life's greatest challenges that independence and freedom are eternally contested constructs. They cannot be counterfeited—Before long, the deception is always unmasked. The truest forms of independence and freedom cannot be

conferred by external sources. They must be worked on from within—from within the country in the case of national independence and, as regards freedom, from within our hearts, minds and practices. The great Bob Marley understood this when he counseled us in song to free ourselves from mental enslavement.

Freedom and Independence are not permanent possessions or automatically sustained; they are but pathways that must be continuously negotiated through the thickets of global and locally imposed impediments.

It is our misfortune that the necessary rhetoric of freedom, which prevailed in the run-up to 1834 and in the peri-Independence period between 1967 and 1972 and has been reinforced by election politics every five years since, has cooked up a witches' brew of delusion that puts the Bahamian people off pace in the journey to a truer emancipation and independence.

Moreover, Bahamians, like other peoples across the globe, have been lulled by soporific fictions of freedom, authored by the rapidity of technological advance and the ease of acquiring indecent wealth by its instrumentation. We were made to believe that we could go to bed poor and wake up the next morning Gates, Jobs, Bezos and Zuckerberg rich. Until the global financial

crash of 2007, we were bedazzled by wizardry of Wall Street, which caused us to focus slavishly on speculative ventures, rather than on the slogging and long-term commitment required to build real and sustainable economies. Thanks to the get-rich-quick and mogul-adoring media, many became convinced that it could become their reality if they dreamed right, if they played the numbers right, if they speculated right.

The reality is diametrically opposed. Populations everywhere, in so-called developed and developing countries, are locked in an intractable serfdom. We live in a time that has served up a Barmecide feast of lack, conflict and chaos. Calling our time an “Age of Disruption”, academics Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaeufer included in their list of global troubles “Water shortage. Resource scarcity. Climate chaos. Mass poverty. Mass migration. Fundamentalism. Terrorism. Financial oligarchies.” (2)

To our detriment, many Bahamians believe, to dangerous zealotry, that we have a specialness, which can protect us from all the contretemps of life. No matter our delusions, however, a country that produces thirteen-year old girls, who carry sawn off shotguns in their bags, along with the obligatory cell phone, is in deep trouble. If I were to write a screenplay for a film on The Bahamas and Bahamian life today, I would title it “On Life

Support”. The theme would be the assailing of our freedoms by youth disaffection, senseless murder, joblessness, endemic insouciance regarding human rights and the environment, landlessness, land grabs, parliamentary exchanges that have more to do with schoolyard brawling than intelligent governance, deficit spending on the national and individual levels, islands in the Exuma Cays perpetually sporting “For Sale” signs or becoming the latest high-ticket accessories of narcissistic celebrity, rising class and ethnic disparities, an education system worthy of the title only as it relates to systemic failure, a health system overwhelmed by a one-in-three morbidity rate in chronic, non-communicable diseases, a bloated and gravely inefficient public bureaucracy that is too tired, politicized or jaded to do the people’s business, and, last but not least, endless political appointments that add to the public payroll but deplete our fund of skilled leadership.

In the midst of growing chaos, we witness, despairing, a range of leaders behaving extra-territorially: pastors playing politician ayatollah style and politicians playing god, accountants and attorneys playing the money markets with client money, bankers mortgaging the future of the next two generations and idle moguls playing ping pong with our country’s dignity and the



future of us all, thanks to the increasing greed and declining fund of integrity exhibited by many Bahamians.

As Brutus says to Cassius in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar on the eve of a decisive battle, "We, at the height, are ready to decline." (3)

To discern a way forward, it is important to assess some of the specific contexts and forces, which define, inform and propel the evolution of the state and its people. They include self-concept or identity, the construction of the economy, governance, planning, education and the dissemination of information. It has been noted that democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. So, above all, we must examine the state of Bahamian democracy, especially as regards the institutionalization of and respect for constitutional provisions, human rights, and equality before the law.

To begin, let us consider three of the most obdurate barriers to the formation of a productive Bahamian self-imaging and the heights The Bahamas could attain, if we saw ourselves and our potential in a truer light. They arise from the enslavement of African Bahamians up to 1834, rule by a minority oligarchy until 1967 and the fact that the islands of The Bahamas, until 1973, were a colony of a foreign power that was racially different for the

most part and geographically and culturally distant. These factors, by their very nature, countervailed freedom and independence, posing a triple threat to the formation in The Bahamas of a dignified, socially and economically mobile polity of African descent. They were, essentially, instruments of tyranny, which combined to create deep-seated habits of dependence and a sense of inferiority in those subjugated.

Even more challenging, the legacy of dependence has passed down through the ages, forcing its way past independence. Where the relationship between government and people should be characterized by shared responsibility, interlocution and progressive partnership as unavoidable prerequisites for gaining and sustaining freedom and independence, it is that of master/provider and self-enslaved, who await the dole of modern versions of osnaburgs and quarts of corn.

It is to the detriment of sustainable development that freedom in the Bahamian context has come to be equated to liberation from all personal responsibilities, limiting boundaries and obligations to productivity. The unbroken history of paternalism in this country has produced a generation lacking the

generative power of personal discipline, delayed gratification and sacrifice when circumstances demand their evocation.

Another negative in the formation of the Bahamian identity is that, for too long, the process has been subjected to and considerably shaped by an imperialist historiography. Consider the questionable generosity of the following statement by Australian historian Colin Hughes:

Does the Herald (a now defunct Bahamian newspaper) advocate that the streets of Nassau should echo the beat of the tom-tom, or witness the primitive rites of voodoo and black magic? Not even the Herald advocates that. And why? Because the people of the Bahamas have had centuries of civilization. There can be no comparison between them and their brothers across the ocean, who are for the most part are only one generation removed from savagery. (4)

Furthermore, the society into which we are born has led us to posit our self-view and well-being almost entirely on things material—jobs, great houses, cars, clothing and electronic gadgets. The institutions upon which we rely heavily for input to character development seem steadfastly to countervail rather than develop the affective domain of the Bahamian mind. Is there any wonder that concepts such as altruism, patriotism,

neighbourliness, civility, self-respect and charity are cast aside as useless abstractions, having no validity in the race for things?

We are suffering a terminal case of what Scharmer and Kaeufer describe as a “mindset of maximum “me”—maximum material consumption, bigger is better and special interest group-driven, decision-making that has led us into a state of organized irresponsibility, collectively creating results nobody wants.” (5)

The possession of a homeland is fundamental to defining identity and independence. Consequently, one would expect there to exist a foundational relationship between the land and those who occupy it and a jealous vigilance for the maintenance of that crucial connection. Yet, to date, only a minority of Bahamians takes seriously the protection of our natural patrimony.

Too many of us do not appreciate the necessity of halting the wanton destruction of marine environment and our forests, especially the mangroves, which function as vital fish nurseries. Neither does the relative scarcity of potable water on limestone islands seem to activate a fierce sense of stewardship for existing sources or zeal to abate water pollution.

In our environmental insouciance, we pay little more than lip service to reducing our carbon footprint by using the sun’s power

more and burning fossil fuels less. Why is it taking the public utility so long to relax its iron grip on anachronistic, expensive and ultimately destructive methods of power generation and to espouse systems and resources, such as solar power, which are abundant and eco-friendly? Could the source be the inaction that monopoly breeds?

Not only are environmental assaults occurring daily throughout the archipelago, we plan them. I'm waiting for someone to explain to me by what mathematical or environmental construct two 600-room hotels could possibly translate into sustainability on a 9-square mile or 23-square kilometer atoll in the Atlantic Ocean with a resident population of about 2000 souls. Is it that we believe resources are infinitely renewable without human stewardship or we simply don't care if our practices lead to exhaustion, as long as we get our share of the wealth before the treasure chest is emptied?

This is illustrative of the prime challenge to a truer independence—our short-fused vision in building the Bahamian economy. Periodically, administrations talk of master planning for development and, apparently, the latest iteration is on the horizon. What principles will drive it? Will it respect our history and heritage, geography and culture or pay attention to the readiness

of the workforce? Will it address economic diversification, self-reliance, productivity and resources protection? Or, will it do just another short-term, carpe diem dance drawing down on our future?

Closely connected is the stagnation in agriculture and other areas of production. The less astute among us may even ask what domestic agriculture and local manufactures have to do with independence. Yet, how long could we stave off hunger and chaos if the planes and ships that link our islands to the rest of the world were to cease doing so for more than a few months?

We build the grand Straw Market and the more culturally aware among us complain of the dearth of locally produced straw product on sale there. But, do we stop to think about the health and size of our stock of the palms that produce the basic material for strawcraft or the protection and replanting of this heritage resource?

There has been a huge upsurge in entrepreneurship in the arts and crafts in this country. How much coherent research has been done in this regard? What provisions have been made to supply tax breaks and other forms of encouragement that could lead a great number of talented Bahamians to self-employment?

It is of great moment to our future as a sovereign nation that our government's business model and general conduct of business provides no model for fiscal success or the promotion of independence. Indeed, public sector enterprise tends to exhibit the seven deadly sins of business that militate against efficiency and profitability. They include:

1. Continued use of anachronistic regulations and practices that were not meant for powering competitive, 21<sup>st</sup> century operations, but for control and the preservation of strict hierarchies. In the Bahamian situation, these superannuated policies and actions are the jealously guarded colonial legacies that abrogate rather than facilitate freedom and independence
2. Massive overstaffing owing to constituency patronage, paybacks to party supporters and militant and greedy unionism, all of which suggests little concern for the health of the overall economy
3. Appointments to key, decision-making positions based more on appointees' party fidelity than on their ability to lead or fidelity to progress.
4. Less than stellar performance from public sector managers and staff, often as a result of mismatches between job demands and the skills and experience of the office holder.

Moreover, incompetence is frequently hidden or allowed to prevail because of political interference and/or union action

5. Poor or complete absence of articulation among government agencies and public corporations, a dysfunction that severely curtails private sector activities at some point along the continuum of unavoidable interaction
6. Poor communication of essential information among government sectors and to the general public
7. Unequal application or distribution of opportunities and benefits to stakeholders, undesirable and costly delays in approvals and issuance of various licenses to individuals and private sector business.

It seems that, more and more, The Bahamas is experiencing a perilous crisis in leadership generally. To our cost, we have often sanctioned to lead us men and women who are incapable of acquitting their responsibilities by reason of egotism or deficiencies in intellect, preparation, creativity, experience and integrity, coupled with an apparently groundless belief in their fitness to occupy their assigned positions, even if they do little more than pick lint from their navels daily.



Nowhere is this failure of leadership more apparent than in the country's governance, an area plagued by deep-rooted disease, which manifests in the following symptoms:

- Members of Parliament act in a manner that would surely result in termination if they clocked in at a serious private-sector enterprise—not showing up for work, substandard performance on the job, unjustified spending of company money, failing to account for the funds entrusted to them and providing a brand of customer service unworthy of the name.
- The National Cabinet does not exhibit the principal characteristic of a cabinet; that is, a united public front. Cabinet members and even Parliamentary Secretaries speak out of turn, often contradicting their leader and other colleagues to make pronouncements that are patently self-serving.

In close connection to the foregoing, we must assess the state of Bahamian democracy. There are those who believe that majority rule has answered all the challenges of Bahamian life, including the preservation of democracy. Majority rule was the critical opening to democracy in this country, correcting a centuries-old inequity. It is not, however, and cannot be the whole cloth, because it does not provide for all the people of The

Bahamas, nor does it address the many other inequities that afflict Bahamian society. In fact, it tends to blind government and people to them.

The U.S. Bureau of International Information makes a valuable contribution to this debate:

[...] Majority rule, by itself, is not automatically democratic. [...] In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of minorities and dissenters – whether ethnic, religious, or simply the losers in political debate. (6)

The struggle for democracy took a frightening turn in 2013. The Speaker of the House of Assembly twice abandoned what should have been his democratic neutrality. In the most recent instance, he permitted a party colleague, under the cloak of House privilege, to usurp the authority of the justice system by asserting a charge of murder against a person in the absence of such a charge by the courts. Yet, just a few days earlier, the Speaker had banned the Leader of the Opposition from two sittings of the House, supposedly for besmirching the good name of the Prime Minister and refusing to apologize. The drama was made lurid by a contingent of police officers tussling to remove the named member from the precincts.

Which was the more egregious fault? Is it not the Opposition's duty to challenge and the Government's duty to refute accusations, not with parlour tricks but with irrefutable facts? The adversarial relationship between Government and Opposition constitutes the very essence of Parliamentary democracy and serves to keep everyone honest and the conduct of the people's business transparent. Together, respecting their constitutional mandate, the two factions are supposed to constitute governance.

I fear what seems a natural progression in Third World politics—declarations of the leader's infallibility and deity, speech unsanctioned by government declared blasphemy and punished by the abrogation of liberty or even life. Just as the progress of freedom and independence are gradual, so too is the march to despotism.

The eminence grise of democracy, freedom and independence is the nature and quality of the education and information afforded a people. These factors largely determine the degree of a people's general awareness and opportunity to develop productive citizenship. Unfortunately, our education system exhibits the reverse. Thousands are being graduated by the nation's schools, though incapable of performing simple arithmetic or filling an application for employment successfully,

incapable of personal discipline and as incapable as the grasshopper in Aesop's fable of thinking beyond present gratification. The system has conspired in the creation of a people too extensively lacking in civic and economic intelligence and ability perform at the higher levels of the cognition—application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis or creation. Truth is, because many teachers do not themselves possess these skills, young Bahamians, despite innate genius, seldom develop even that essential middle level that is interpretation and extrapolation. I suppose it is far easier to plan and give lessons that focus on knowledge of specifics and regurgitating them. How does one self-liberate when one is held fast in the net of this void? It should not be surprising that we produce citizens ignorant of privileges and duties of citizenship and unable to conceive of futurity, a people whose zeal for productivity stands in inverse proportion to their aspirations.

I present now a modest proposal for moving forward, upward, onward, together.

I contend that the societal and economic ills of The Bahamas are systemic and each of us—Parliamentarians, Bahamian citizens, permanent residents, investors—carries a strand of the DNA of the virus, which is infecting the body politic. Secondly, we

have no time for recriminations; it will take all of us working in concert to ensure a more stable and rewarding new day.

Thirdly, I contend that one-off solutions are not solutions at all. The fundamental strategy must address the entire system, in terms of causation and remediation. Furthermore, we must begin by discarding the maverick, political, shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later approach, where we install impotent committees, engage a raft of expensive consultants, local and imported, spend much money and, lastly, flood Parliament and the media with recriminations when the strategy fails.

Let us begin by understanding that sustainable development is not achieved by building up economic/physical capital alone. While these elements are essential, they cannot long survive without complementary levels of social and natural capital, all closely articulated and mutually nourishing.

In building social capital, we must give urgent priority to disseminating a truer picture of our identity as a people, especially of African Bahamian identity. Until now, our histories have been very much in the colonial triumphalist vein that glorifies colonial secretaries of state, who appear as *dei ex machina* and miraculously solve unrest. In contrast, Bahamian efforts are either downplayed or made to seem the misbehavior of truculent

children—either white country bumpkins or “uppity blacks” who “are being goaded on by the scurrilous foreign press.” The New York Times of September 4, 1967 attributed this description of black Bahamians to an Englishman in The Bahamas on a work permit in the aftermath of the Progressive Liberal Party’s electoral victory of January 10. (7)

We must tell a truer story of our leaders and do a better job of identifying and celebrating heroes, who are models for emulation. Our selection process must be unhindered by partisanship, racism and family attempts at self-aggrandizement. We must tell the story of the Bahamian people, which privileges their struggles to free themselves.

We must write of a democracy that is still incomplete, while there are still minorities that struggle not just for equity, but for survival and dignity. How else can our society find healing, if we persist in erecting smokescreens to hide our societal disabilities? It serves us ill to write narratives of national unity and progress when women's rights are still being crushed beneath an obdurate patriarchy. Through well-researched and truthful writing we must unmask the covert racism that is practiced by and against all racial and ethnic groups. We must lay bare discrimination against the disabled, Bahamians of Haitian descent and gays, who are

still denied some of the most basic of rights of belonging; that is, the right to dignity and the pursuit of peace and personal safety.

If we understand the vital role writing plays in development of people and state, we will actively promote it to speed up the pace of building a credible national literature. I propose that we do so by awarding grants to serious writers. It is necessary to set up an independent committee to scrutinize applications and award according to merit and not politics. It's time also for national, juried awards programmes for writing in various genres. There must a systematic, critical assessment of new published materials to identify those that can be used in the schools or acquired for the collection of the National Library.

To begin the process of shoring up Bahamian democracy, we need to remind ourselves of what it consists or should consist:

- Sovereignty of the people
- Government based upon consent of the governed
- Majority rule
- Minority rights
- Guarantee of basic human rights
- Free and fair elections
- Equality before the law
- Due process of law

- Constitutional limits on government
- Social, economic, and political pluralism
- Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and compromise

What The Bahamas chiefly needs in this instance is an institutional watchdog to champion human rights to which all humankind is entitled, regardless of history, creed, physical attributes, culture, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability or penal incarceration. We are in urgent need of a civil liberties union, a non-governmental institution, not posited on emotion or political agenda, but dedicated to observing, conducting scientific research in the field, gathering information, archiving documentation and educating Bahamians as to their rights under the law. With the establishment of such a body, when a person or group is challenged to back up a claim of human rights abuse, there would be recourse to a non-judgmental ear, expert assessment of the merits of their issue and advice and support in pursuing the matter through the justice system, if the case demands.

It is essential to require and enforce greater accountability at all levels of public engagement. If Parliament does not yet have a code of conduct, one should be written with full public



participation. Among the areas of focus must be strict rules against conflict of interest. If we are serious, we will specify percentages of ownership and interest, which will decide a Parliamentarian's ability to vote on a matter.

The code should enforce the notion that Members of Parliament are servants of the people, who are paid to work for their benefit and must give an accounting of their stewardship like any responsible employee. They should decidedly not draw pay for arrogant non-performance.

There should be obligatory training programmes for new parliamentarians to familiarize them with the constitution, particularly as relates to their parliamentary mandate. They must be exposed to seminars in ethics, standards of performance, etiquette, dignity and statesmanship. The most fundamental lesson must that "Parliament" and "government" are institutionalized constructs of independence and freedom, which must be held sacrosanct and are not the playing pieces in the political game.

In a democracy, leadership and planning must be participatory, inclusive and transparent. They should not simply top-down pronouncements from the inscrutable Mount Olympus that the Bahamas Parliament is in 2013. It is essential to counter

a growing authoritarianism, which encourages government to exceed its mandate and place new yokes on the necks to law-abiding Bahamians. In reply, we must cultivate greater plurality. One way to do this is by supporting forums, institutes, civic clubs that demonstrate balance, a wealth of knowledge and overall social responsibility to represent the voice of the people in public affairs and serve as mediators between them and government. A public service television station exhibiting the proper demeanor of a public broadcaster would be of great help in this instance.

As regards master planning, we need an economic plan that moves us from an ego-centric system to an eco-centric system, as defined by Scharmer and Kaeufer. Master plans must be grounded in the realities of our geography, history, our demographics and culture. This means that national planning must take into account our needs as a developing, maritime nation with fragile soils that are easily exhausted without expert management and the need to reduce this country's heavy dependence on service industries.

Any efforts to make long-lasting changes in the economy or society arise from an intimate articulation with the education system. If we are to increase national self-sufficiency, we need to develop more Bahamian expertise in all branches of agricultural,

marine sciences and the technologies of food production. In this case, government and private sector scholarship grantors can favour these areas of study in the apportionment of awards.

It is essential now to make a few suggestions for ameliorating the current dire crisis in education, if it is to better fit Bahamians to take on the planning and development challenges. Let us take for granted that there are many home factors that inform school success or failure and leave that discussion for another day, as the attendant conditions are too broad for a few minutes' review. I have chosen to spend the time on school factors that are amenable to more immediate action.

1. We are not channeling sufficient numbers of the brighter students towards careers in teaching. They are drawn towards the higher prestige, higher paid professions in the private sector. The answer is to provide better inducements. We must raise the profile and pay accorded educators, who are the foundation of all else that takes place socially and economically. Attract the geniuses towards teaching by according grants, privileges and recognition they can't refuse. Let's create "Golden Girls" and "Golden Knights" of teaching.
2. For classroom teachers, let's get rid of education as the first degree major and leave it for master's level and beyond.

Instead, we must create subject specialists, who undergo at college a four-year concentration in what they will teach and a fifth year dedicated to teaching practice and acquiring a license to teach.

3. Once in the teaching service, educators from preschool to high school must undergo recertification every three years. The process should include a specified number of hours of certified refresher study and activities and an examination at the end of every three-year cycle. This is the process in many other professions; why should less be required of the builders of men and women?
4. Let us consider the proxemics of the precincts of education. How much good can come out of facilities that are ill-provisioned and ill-kempt and sadly lacking any degree of comfort?
5. Let us develop a teachers union that is as much focused on the quality of teachers and teaching as on pay. Let it be an ombudsman for the profession, which is jealously vigilant of the quality of practice and will move swiftly to correct where problems arise.

Above all, let us begin remediation at the beginning—primary level. Here is where the best of the best should be assigned—the best and most caring administrators and classroom practitioners.

No child should leave primary school without being unshakably literate and numerate. Leave off the hours dedicated to junkanoo and pageantry to junior school or higher.

In teaching at all levels, it is essential to stop marking time at the knowledge and memorization levels. Lessons must be rich in the challenge of extrapolation, application, analysis, evaluation and creation of new knowledge. Given the increasing disaffection of Bahamian youth, it is as urgent to concentrate on the development of the affective domain of learning, which targets awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion, feelings and conflict management.

Freedom and Independence require the nourishment of truthful, timely information. The way forward in this regard has been well expressed by Kiran Maharaj, President of the *Trinidad & Tobago* Publishers and Broadcasters Association:

As journalists we owe it to ourselves and our society to share the stories that show the fray in our social fabric with the intention of creating positive change. [...] We must keep working at raising the bar of excellence in Journalism. Media owners have to decide what is more important—borderline sensationalism [...] or more responsible and accurate reporting. Kiran Maharaj, President of the Trinidad & Tobago

Publishers and Broadcasters Association, noted at the IPI World Congress, closing ceremony, June 26, 2012, Port of Spain, Trinidad (8)

We Bahamians must come to understand that freedom and independence are demanding mistresses, who impose strict conditions upon those who would enjoy their company. We must pay their rent, feed them, clothe them and never turn our attention from this jealous pair. To keep tight and supple their ever-aging skin of laws and custom, we must be quick to supply the cosmetics of wisdom, currency and timely constitutional amendments, without which freedom and independence would soon lose their beauty and fade. Most urgently, we need Freedom of Information and Environmental Protection Acts.

A survivable future cannot just be about firefighting and tinkering with the surface of change. A more equitable future requires us to tap into a deeper level of our humanity. We need to internalize who we are and what we want to be as a society, both based on our own resources.

Now is the time in to act. Our tide is at the flood. Despite the collapse of many of the comfortable traditions and practices we once depended upon, never before in our history have we experienced a time more pregnant with opportunity. Never before

has the possibility of profound personal, societal, and global renewal been more real. The seeds of tomorrow are sown and watered today. They can be seeds of despair and dissolution or seeds of aspiration and achievement. Let us choose the latter and commit to contributing our many talents to this urgent enterprise of liberation, starting this very day.

## Notes

1. Kodell, Abott Jerome. Retrieved from <http://www.countrymonks.us/freedom-and-independence>
2. Scharmer, Otto and Katrin Kaeufer. (2013) *Leading from the Emerging Future*. San Francisco: Berrett-koeehler Publishers, Inc. (Kindle book, location 40 of 5044.)
3. Julius Caesar, Act 4, scene 3, 216–217
4. Hughes, Colin. (1981) *Race and Politics in The Bahamas*. (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press), pp. 70-71)
5. Scharmer and Kauefer, op.cit.
6. “What is Democracy?” Bureau of International Information Systems, U.S. State Department <http://usinfo.state.gov>
7. Waldron, Martin. (September 4, 1967) Bahamian Negroes staging peaceful revolution, New York: The New York Times.

8. Kiran Maharaj, President of the Trinidad & Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association, noted at the IPI World Congress, closing ceremony, June 26, 2012, Port of Spain, Trinidad