



BRIEF REMARKS

by

THE HONOURABLE T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

on the occasion of the:

**Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's
23rd Annual Honours Day Convocation**

at

**Government House
Mount Fitzwilliams
Nassau, The Bahamas**

1:00 p.m.

25th April, 2010

Salutations:

1. His Excellency Sir Arthur Foulkes –Governor General of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

2. Reverend Don Haynes

3. Dr. Valentine Grimes –Chairman
4. Mr. Marcus Laing – Vice-President

5. Executive Members & all Other Members of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

6. Stakeholders

7. Teachers & Parents
8. Honourees

9. Ladies & Gentlemen
10. Boys & Girls

Good Afternoon!

I consider it a true honour to have been asked to participate in the **Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Annual Honours Day Convocation**. I am particularly delighted to learn that this ceremony is being held in recognition of our young men, two in particular who will be chosen for their outstanding achievements. This much needed initiative places the focus on what the young males in our schools are doing. We are all very much aware of the many negative influences that daily bombard our youth, and young men in particular, have a difficult task in making the right decisions especially when they are faced with peer pressure. It is not easy for young people these days who are expected to navigate messages via the radio, television, internet, and print media, that are entirely positive. I, therefore, am in full support of this effort that shines a spotlight on the exceptional talents, skills, abilities and scholastic accomplishments of our male students.

Honourees, you are in excellent company. The Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity has a proud and rich history, having gotten its start in 1906, when it gave voice to

the struggle for African –Americans and people around the world. The fraternity which is an international organization, shows its commitment to nation building through providing educational training leadership development, and scholarship opportunities for young men all over the world. Under the leadership of Chairman, Dr. Valentine Grimes, this Honours Day Ceremony which was established in 1987, serves as an inspiration and a standard to which all males of school age should aspire. Alpha Phi Alpha is touching many lives with this effort and we, at the Ministry of Education applaud you for playing this leadership role and for partnering with us in helping our students to “*achieve their dreams through excellence in education.*” I am sure that we would all agree that if we all share in the responsibility of transforming our nation, we would soon eradicate most of our problems.

Your theme: “***Biography –What Will Your Story Be?***” is meant to evoke in you, thoughts regarding your future. What sort of life do you envision for yourself? Do you have a *Vision* for your life and have you made an *Action Plan*? Awesome God –given

potential is harnessed within each of you that must be developed so that when your biography is written it would be an inspirational story to those hearing and reading about it. You have reached this wonderful milestone in your lives, but you have not yet arrived. Understand that there are still many more goals for you to set, and there is much more for you to accomplish. It was Scottish businessman and entrepreneur, Andrew Carnegie who once said, ***“Think of yourself as on the threshold of unparalleled success. A whole clear, glorious life lies before you. Achieve! Achieve!”***

Today, forty one (41) young men who hail from both public and private schools on our Family Islands and here in New Providence sit before us. As Minister of Education, not only am I filled with pride, but I also have hope for the future of our young men. Some are being lost to deviant lifestyles and prison, but thankfully, this is not true of the majority. Honourees, your diligence to your work, your involvement in positive extra curricular activities, and your grade point averages (GPA) of 3.0 and above have earned you

the right to be seated where you are at this moment. I am told that you would have participated in competitive activities which included:

- *Essay writing of 400 words;*
- *General Knowledge Quiz; and*
- *Tests in English Language and Mathematics.*

This afternoon, you will be the recipients of several awards which comprise, in addition to others, the:

1. *Legal Debate Award;*
2. *Commerce Award;*
3. *Math Award;*
4. *Science Award;* and the
5. *Family Island Student Award* –given to the highest achieving student from the Family Islands.

Students, we, at the Ministry of Education encourage you to dream big and to work hard. We are there to lend support and will make every opportunity available to you to find success, whether you are academically inclined or motivated by the technical and vocational subjects. We have made available to you, various scholarships, special awards, and grants

that can be accessed should you qualify. We have also partnered with several stakeholders such as:

The College of The Bahamas to provide an education free of charge to students obtaining 5 *Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE)* subjects with passes of “C” and above; two of which should be in English and Mathematics.

The **Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute** also offers a high standard of study that is on par with similar institutions around the world.

There are also the **Gerace Research Centre Awards** for students interested in research in the area of Marine Biology.

We would like to encourage some of your young men to enter the field of education. We wish to attract and retain the brightest and the best minds in the field of teaching. For this initiative we offer Education Grants for our **Future Teachers of The Bahamas** Programme. Young men a sound education is an important tool for you on your journey to success. Please consider that a college degree will enhance your critical thinking and improve your opportunity to achieve the highest possible levels of success.

As the Ministry of Education forges ahead this year in renewing our commitment to improve the level of student performance in reading, writing and arithmetic and ensuring that values such as respect and a sense of responsibility are instilled in students, we implore you to avail yourselves to the numerous opportunities available to you. Continue to work well so that one day in the very near future you may be able to:

- Take up the challenges of sustaining our country's growth and development;
- Find creative ways to fix our country's economy;
- Improve the products that we offer and the level of service in our country; and
- Help us to become more diverse in our thinking and more unified as a nation.

Once again, I commend the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and offer my heartiest congratulations to the 41 Honourees. I dare not forget the dedicated teachers who would have daily worked behind the scenes with these young men in their educational growth and development. I would also wish to

encourage other persons especially parents to become actively involved in the lives of their children. Let us all work to build our youth and teach them good values. There is much that each of us can do in shaping the youth in a positive way. Let us show them the way by being the positive role models that they need in their lives.

My best wishes to each of you for the future, and remember that you are all winners having made it this far.