A Blueprint for the Future of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

Raynard Rigby
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To the memory of Arlene Albury (nee Wisdom: 1949 – 2008), a Bahamian pioneer and heroine, the former Director of Student Activities at the College of The Bahamas.

She was a remarkable woman who always placed the needs of others far beyond her own. She taught me the beauty and essence of public service. I miss her greatly!
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An Open Letter

July 2008

Fellow Bahamians,

I believe that The Bahamas holds an awesome potential for her people.

I have always had a deep fascination with The Bahamas and what the future holds for my country.

I believe that since Independence we have allowed petty political partisanship to slowly destroy the great potential of our nation. Personal political objectives have taken on a greater importance than the best interests of the Bahamian people. We must change this and do so now.

I am convinced that our country is in need of a new direction. I am convinced that our country, our people, you and I, can together chart this new course.

We need a fresh start.

Our people must be inspired and a new level of energy and enthusiasm must be kindled. We must move swiftly to erase the dashed hopes of the poor and the emerging
middle class. The Bahamian people must be given a new sense of hope in the future.

I believe that we need to start a national conversation about the future of The Bahamas. This BLUEPRINT is intended to stimulate this conversation.

I trust that you will read each page, sharing and recording your views and perspectives, as we work together to create a better Bahamas for all, a Bahamas where the people’s voice is heard addressing our future direction.

I believe that together we can frame a vision for a new Bahamas.

I thank you for taking the time to read this BLUEPRINT and I encourage you to be a part of a national conversation, which will cut across partisan, race, economic and social divides.

We have the capacity to create a national blueprint that will guarantee an economic, political and social structure for the sustained prosperity of all Bahamians.

Sincerely,
Raynard Rigby
Introduction

Every Bahamian has a view as to what should happen in The Bahamas. It is seen all the time, whether at family gatherings or meetings; someone will say something about what should happen to fix that problem or this problem. I guess that is the sheer beauty of living in this place we call home. Our views about the future are really glimpses of our individual vision for The Bahamas.

I, too, have some views about what should happen in my country. My vision may be no different from the views and aspirations of many others. I believe though that we have to commit to sharing our visions and talking about them. Achieving consensus and then demanding that the government, the private sector and each of us use an ‘agreed’ blueprint to develop opportunities which will set us on the path to creating a better Bahamas for our children and future generations of Bahamians.

This is my way of getting you to commit to this process. The BLUEPRINT presents my views on how to make The Bahamas a better place for all of us. I am sharing my vision. I see this as a start of a ‘big conversation’, one that will require our passion for our country and our creative energies.

Won’t you share your vision?
Chapter 1

A New Economic Agenda

Many credit Sir Stafford Sands as the architect of the modern Bahamian economy. It is widely stated that during the 1950’s the potential of year-round tourism and a modern banking system were realized. Since then, the Bahamian economy has not changed much, notwithstanding the repeated calls for its diversification. Our economy is devoid of new ideas, of a new approach. In fact, today we are facing an economic crisis, resulting from poor fiscal planning and, above all, a lack of vision.

What do we face today?

We are not producers of goods, but we are great consumers. Our economy may be expanding, but for far too many Bahamians it is shrinking.

As a result of the limited dimensions of our tourism products, our tourism numbers are declining. Further contraction can be expected as we face strong competition from the region, in particular the inevitable opening up of Cuba.

Freeport, created to be the manufacturing and industrial centre of The Bahamas, has been a non-performer.

We have no national agenda for a sustainable agricultural and fisheries industry.

Our national economic priority is primarily focused on attracting foreign direct investment for tourist developments.

Not one major hotel is owned by a Bahamian even though Tourism is the number one sector in our economy.

There has been very little emphasis placed on Bahamian ownership of our economy. Too few Bahamians own banks and trust companies.
The process to decision making has been slow and cumbersome.

**A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE**

The national goal and priority of the Bahamian people must be to create an economy abounding with opportunities ensuring a broad based prosperity.

Bahamians must be the primary beneficiaries of a growing economy.

The Government’s policies must complement and support Bahamian ownership of the economy. The push towards economic empowerment of the Bahamian people must be the desired result.

A new economic model must be created which will build on the successes already achieved in Tourism and the Financial Services Sector.

A National Economic Development Plan must be created after widespread public discussion. This Plan must be a 30-year plan that sets out the economic vision of The Bahamas for the next generation of Bahamians. This plan must have critical benchmarks to ensure accountability.

Specifically, the Plan must address the following:

*The Bahamian Entrepreneur*

Our present investment policy must be radically revamped. We must have policies and programmes which ensure that Bahamian entrepreneurs are positioned to be major players in our economy. Through increased support by way of guarantee schemes, venture capital funding and creative lending and equity funding arrangements, the Bahamian entrepreneur must become a major participant in achieving economic success and promoting national development.
The Government, through legislation and policy, must seek to curb the ease with which only foreign investors are allowed to borrow from local banks and other financial institutions.

Legislation should be enacted to ensure that Bahamians are afforded equal opportunity to borrow savings deposited in the Bahamian financial system for their own commercial undertakings. Similarly, Bahamians must be allowed and encouraged to borrow US Dollars from local financial institutions.

Through direct involvement and participation, the Government should identify and support business opportunities for Bahamians, assisting in the start-up and management of such opportunities. This deliberate policy would ensure that there are small and medium sized businesses operated by Bahamians in The Bahamas. This kind of policy will set the stage for stronger linkages in the tourism, agriculture and craft manufacturing sectors.

Tourism Development

A concerted effort should be made to create Bahamian owned and operated boutique hotels on all of the major Family Islands. A specialized incentive programme should be created exclusively for Bahamians interested in constructing and managing small hotels on the Family Islands.

Deliberate policy objectives supported by targeted programme interventions must be established to lead to the creation of a strong and vibrant local craft industry.

Heritage tourism must be expanded and encouraged in order to enrich the visitor experience. This specialized branch of tourism should have its own added incentives and concessions for participants.

A deliberate approach must be undertaken to strengthen the overall tourism product and to reposition The Bahamas as the regional leader with a new marketing thrust and an
expansion of the traditional visitor base.

*Alternative Management – New Options for Nassau*

Legislation should be passed to establish a Mayoral district of the City of Nassau. The City should be self regulated, allowing for greater efficiency of operation.

The City should also encompass the country's strong banking and financial services sectors.

The primary responsibility of the Office of Mayor should be to raise the necessary funds to lead to the transformation of the City of Nassau. It should also focus on the establishment of tourist adventures, seasonal cultural events and native nightlife. This will be an added dimension to the new tax incentives extended for the upgrade of the City.

The transformation of Bay Street must be seen as a national priority. The thrust must have as its core objectives the gentrification of the historic Bay Street, transforming it into a business, tourist and entertainment mecca.

*Manufacturing and Industrial Development*

Special incentives should be offered to entice and invite strategically identified international corporations and industries to establish economic ventures in The Bahamas. Given the high labour cost and the generally recognized high cost of doing business in The Bahamas, these incentives must be tailored to reflect a new economic thrust.

Souvenir manufacturing and development should be an economic priority with realistic goals set for the expansion of this segment of our economic life.

Efforts should be made to create meaningful economic partnerships with India and China.
A New Taxation Regime

A national discussion must commence on a new taxation system model. At the same time, comprehensive measures must be taken to reduce taxation on the poor.

Wealth Creation through Home Ownership

Greater tax credits should be awarded to Bahamians purchasing a home for the first time so as to stimulate home ownership among all income groups.

The Government’s traditional home building programme should be phased out, allowing for the private sector to lead in the delivery of housing solutions. The Government should create an environment whereby the costs of home construction can be maintained at a reasonable level, intervening in the market only to protect the most vulnerable.

Our building code (standards) should be amended to call for the elimination of out-houses. All landlords ought to be mandated to construct proper bathroom facilities at a requisite standard.

Protecting the Consumer

A Bill of Rights for consumers must be introduced to allow for the greater protection of consumers.

All existing consumer protection legislation must be modernized to strengthen the rights of consumers in their commercial dealings. New laws must be introduced to protect the Bahamian consumer.

Environmental Management

A clear and sound environmental protection policy must be established.
The goals of development must not compromise the Bahamian beach and coastline. There must be zero tolerance for the destruction of our environment.

An environmental protection agency should be established with legislative authority to police the environment and to punish those who degrade our fragile and precious environmental resources with heavy penalties, including imprisonment.

Public Sector Reform

In order to benefit from any progressive initiatives, the people of The Bahamas must be strong proponents of public sector reform. The Civil Service must be overhauled and transformed into an efficient and effective deliverer of public services. There must also be a new culture of professionalism leading to the execution of timely decisions, and informed discussion by the general public in matters of national interests.

There must be land reform leading to the imposition of a modern land registration system thereby bringing certainty to land ownership in The Bahamas. This will create wealth amongst land owners in the Family Islands and will allow for Bahamians to secure lending options for development.

MY VISION

- That a new economic agenda for The Bahamas is set based on a model which places greater emphasis on the creation of Bahamian owned and operated businesses, with a strong and diverse entrepreneurial base and with meaningful incentives and concessions for Bahamian business owners.

- That the economy be firmly placed in the hands of Bahamians.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
For too long our educational system has produced too many functionally illiterate Bahamians. This is setting the stage for challenges both now and in the future. We must address this if we are to ensure that Bahamians are positioned to ‘own our economy’.

Our educational system still ‘slavishly’ follows the systems and patterns established in the days of colonialism. There has been no radical reform undertaken in our post-independence period. The focus has been on increasing access, but not addressing relevance. Therefore, while we have made strides in the provision of free education, we have failed to prepare our youth for the highly competitive global environment.

We can take some comfort in the gains made from the ongoing transformation of the College of The Bahamas.

Sadly, a growing number of our people are no longer inspired to learn, to see learning as an ongoing process well beyond the basic three ‘Rs’. Increasingly families and segments of our society no longer place a high value on a sound education.

Excellence has been replaced with mediocrity. Education is no longer seen as a national priority.

Far too many intellectually bright and promising Bahamians have no means to pay for a tertiary education. The present loan scholarships create too much of a financial burden on parents and students.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

Education must be seen as a national priority.
There can be no price tag placed on the further expansion and crucial enhancement of the national educational system.

Teachers must be paid a salary commensurate with the role that they play as nation builders. The performance of students should set the stage for variations in teachers’ salaries.

State of the art schools must be built and properly staffed.

Students must be inspired to learn by their parents, by community leaders and by their peers.

The national curriculum must be overhauled. Emphasis must be placed on a Bahamian oriented curriculum.

While our contact classroom hours can remain the same, we must consider extending school hours, setting the stage for structured post classroom time to continue the development of students through extra-curricular activities and constructive volunteer work.

Special incentives must be offered to boys who perform well. More effort must be made to level the playing field of learning so that boys can place a similar value on education as do girls.

Parents must be held accountable for students who are failing.

A scheme must be established to phase out government control of schools, allowing for greater autonomy and independence by elected school boards.

The government should provide grant and aid to schools based on the performance of their students.

Specialized learning environments catering to gifted and challenged students must be guaranteed.
A national strategy should be developed to redesign the emphasis at pre-school and primary schools so that all students are exposed to trained teachers and quality instruction. A foreign language and computer science curriculum should be introduced within the pre-school setting.

Focus and added investment must also be given to the establishment of an adolescent health initiative.

The national emphasis must be placed on ensuring that no child is left behind and that each child can read, write and do basic arithmetic.

The Government should create a policy whereby tertiary education is free for all Bahamians who can gain acceptance at a recognized tertiary institution.

Mediocrity must be eliminated from our educational psyche.

We must strive to train and prepare all Bahamians for a glorious and prosperous future. We must provide opportunities for ongoing learning, ensuring that our people are always positioned to take advantage of emerging opportunities. Our national sovereignty demands it.

MY VISION

- That Bahamians value a sound education and embrace the benefit of life-long learning. That the link between an educated people and a successful national development strategy is strengthened and should be reflected at all levels in our formal educational system, taking root at the pre-school level all the way to tertiary education.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
The Bahamian society has undergone both social and economic transformation since the 1960s. The pace of modernization has resulted in the increasing exposure to western cultures and this has not always impacted positively on our society.

We are experiencing an increase in anti-social behaviour, violence and the end product is increased criminal activity.

The attitudes of far too many of our citizens are increasingly negative and less emphasis is being placed on our traditional values.

Too many Bahamians are enticed to become a part of the world of crime and criminality.

As crime surges, too many young Bahamians glorify crime and criminals.

This growing epidemic is worsened as the strengthening of our Judicial System has been placed on a backburner by successive governments.

There can be no prosperity, no sustained economic development if we do not move now. A change is imperative if our nation is to survive.

**A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE**

*Collective Responsibility*

We, the individual Bahamian, the community, the Church and those who govern must take collective responsibility for addressing this creeping scourge – violence and crime.

We must move to address the anti-social behaviour emerging in our classrooms, public places and our communities, emphasizing specialized programmes that focus on mediation and alternatives for resolving conflicts.
Partnerships involving the Community, the Church and the Police must be strengthened. Crime prevention programmes must be established in all communities, backed by a national resolve to ensure their effectiveness.

Parents must be made legally responsible for their minor children’s criminal behaviour.

The criminal element must know that it is not business as usual. They must know because we speak with one voice and by our actions and say: “Enough is enough! We are retaking our country NOW!”.

The Criminal Justice System

The Judiciary should be given the resources that will aid in its effective functioning and management. There should be no price tag on the Judiciary. This is the bedrock of our sovereignty and independence. Judges must be paid decent salaries thereby encouraging more qualified Bahamians to serve as Judges on the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.

A new Court Complex must be constructed with multifaceted features and state of the art equipment. This would clearly demonstrate our national resolve for the strengthening of this vital constitutional institution.

The Police Force must be stripped of its prosecutorial role. Qualified lawyers should serve as prosecutors in all Courts to strengthen the system and to ensure fairness.

Political influences must be eliminated in both the Police and Defence Forces. Each must be modernized and led by an innovative leadership team equipped with crime-fighting techniques which will impact on the growing levels of criminal activity.

HM Fox Hill Prison must remain on the present path of rehabilitation to further reduce the recidivism rate.

The opportunity for those charged with serious criminal offences to receive bail must be eliminated. A commitment must be made to commence criminal prosecutions within a six-month period after formal charges are laid.
The Penal Code must be modernized. New and modern offences must be reflected in the Laws. A system of “two strikes” should be implemented to cause for the life imprisonment of those convicted of two major criminal offences.

Immigration

A clear and concise immigration policy must be established, one geared towards maintenance of our borders and safeguarding the territory of The Bahamas.

The new immigration policy must mandate a clear path to obtaining Bahamian citizenship and permanent residency.

A special unit should be established to address the rights of those who are considered “stateless”.

A National Identity Card should be implemented and made available to all Bahamians.

MY VISION

- That crime is seen as a societal and national problem and not one isolated to those residing in the inner city neighbourhoods. Churches, communities and all Bahamians must recommit to zero tolerance against crime and anti-social behaviour. That each of us manifest a resolve to fight crime and all forms of criminality, beginning with the basic traffic violation and ensuring that we are honest in all of our dealings. That we have a Judiciary that is respected and held up as an important constitutional pillar. That our borders are safe from poachers, illegal immigrants and drug dealers.

- That The Bahamas moves forward to a land of both peace and prosperity.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
We have made significant investments in our young. Many have gone on to become not just outstanding contributors to nation building here in The Bahamas but are achieving at significant levels across the globe. Still, however, there are challenges.

We have failed to adequately invest and make provision for youth employment and training as a matter of our national development strategy.

Far too many young Bahamians are engaging in anti-social behaviour and some are being drawn into the world of violence and criminality.

Too many of the Nation’s youth are lost. Too many are underachievers. Too few value a sound education. Too few have a plan for the future.

When I observe this I ask: Are the homes and the schools to blame? Is the Church playing its role? Are parents not parenting? I believe much of the answer lies in a combination of all.

This is why we need a national commitment to fix the problems, to address the issues and to find the practical solutions to steer our children, our future, on the path to success and achievement.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

We must develop and implement bold and progressive initiatives to rescue our youth. Character building and values training must be a national priority. Conflict resolution sessions must be mandatory for all school age children.
Meaningful incentives and a clear national policy must be established to address the current dropout, underachieving culture.

A National Youth Service must be introduced and made mandatory for all Bahamians between the ages of 12 to 18. The programme must focus on character building, conflict resolution and establishing and reinforcing values.

Churches should be encouraged to expand on their existing youth movements with an appropriate mix of outreach activities targeted at neighbouring communities.

There must be a national commitment to invest in the economic future of the Bahamian youth and thereby ensure that he has a stake in the economic development strategy and the success that we will achieve. Policy makers must plan for the future generations of Bahamians by safe-guarding their rights to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities and training.

MY VISION

• That we, through an expanded learning experience, the increased role of families and communities and the Church, ensure that our young people focus their energies and talents on nation building. That young people are allowed to participate in the national debate and their views and opinions are heard and respected.

• That young Bahamians are grounded in values and reverence to themselves, their family, their peers, their community and the law.

• That we return to a culture of mutual respect.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
There is no doubt that the traditional concept of Bahamian “familyhood” played a major role in the building of the modern Bahamas. Mothers have proven to be good breadwinners in many homes. The fact is that in today’s Bahamas women lead the majority of the Bahamian households. Whilst this phenomenon is not likely to change in the short term, the marginalization of the Bahamian male must be discussed. This is imperative for our future and the future of our children.

The typical Bahamian family faces real challenges in meeting basic needs. Incomes are stagnant and there is a general tendency to spend much more than one earns.

The growing trend towards single parent homes is incontrovertible evidence of the abandonment of traditional values.

Poverty is increasing and too many Bahamians are resorting to social security payments in order to survive.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

We must restore the traditional values that guided us in the formative years of nationhood.

Families must be strengthened and morality and decency must also be restored.

Single parent homes must no longer be the norm. Where they exist we must conceive creative approaches to ensure that children receive some of the benefits of a two parent household, in particularly ensuring that they have access to male/female role models.
Men must be encouraged to play a greater role in parenting and family development.

A national parenting and children’s training programme must be established. Parenting is a learned art and, for some of us, it does take longer to learn.

Community leaders must be inspired to play a greater role in advancing the innate humanity of the Bahamian people.

A national commitment must exist and programmes must be created to eliminate poverty in all of its forms.

The family must be seen as a vital part of the thrust towards building a stronger society.

MY VISION

• That we build a society through the creation of meaningful partnerships between men and women in an environment that promotes the wholesome development of our children so as to restore values and morals and to establish a society where each child is seen as a valuable asset in national development.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
The Bahamas is a relatively rich and prosperous nation. Our health care system has undergone some level of modernization. Every effort has been made to create a social security scheme which will ensure an acceptable quality of life for retirees. Our social support programs appear to be adequate.

The focus has been on a health care system which responds, with less emphasis on one that prevents. The cost of prevention is often less than efforts at treatment.

We cannot ignore the fact that poverty remains a concern.

With our ongoing exposure to the global economy, economic dislocation is becoming more prevalent.

We must recognize that a healthy Bahamian is an asset in the drive towards a sustainable national development strategy. We have work to do if we are to achieve this.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

We must reform the National Insurance scheme. People must be better able to understand what benefits are available and how they can access them.

A national strategy must be unveiled to address the escalation in poverty, by focusing on ensuring that every Bahamian who can work has work at a living wage.

Expanded benefits must be established for seniors so that they can live out their golden years in dignity.

Holistic social security programmes catering to displaced...
workers, underemployed and non-employable persons, including persons with severe disabilities, must be created at the national level.

A strong and sustained programme of healthy lifestyles and life choices must be encouraged with ongoing monitoring to demonstrate the impact of these choices on the quality of life of Bahamians and the impact on the cost of providing health services.

A national commitment must exist to ensure that all Bahamians enjoy affordable health insurance coverage.

A national programme for dental, eye and aural care must be established for preschoolers intended in part to ensure that there are no challenges to learning as our young progress through the school system.

Legislation should be introduced to regulate pension schemes and programmes and to allow for portability between and amongst employers.

MY VISION

• That all Bahamians embrace the responsibility for the quality of their life by adopting healthier lifestyles. That our health care system is positioned to deal with the needs of an aging population with critical major medical services. That our social security system addresses the needs of the most vulnerable among us.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
Bahamians are generally very proud people, and they have reason to be so. Our sportsmen and women have done us proud, our artisans and artists can and have taken the international stage. The evidence in our pride can be noted when we see the growing respect for our national symbols and the contributions made by our founding fathers and mothers.

However, as we have pushed towards our initial economic frontier we have been exposed more and more to other cultures. The images of other cultures are being increasingly ingrained in the minds of our young.

As we sit together to set a new frontier for economic development and prosperity for all, we must not sacrifice our culture and our history.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

We must be committed to the continued evolution of our cultural expression by encouraging and inspiring a cultural renaissance.

Adequate funding must be provided for the Arts with increased focus on preserving our folklore and story telling.

Greater national emphasis must be placed on the sponsorship and enhancement of local artists and artisans. A recognition of their outputs as a critical component of a new look suite of tourism products is critical.

A National Flag Day should be established to bring public attention to the Bahamian Flag and the other national symbols.
A National Heroes Park should be established in a prominent location to bring public recognition to the role played by our forefathers and foremothers and in this regard the Government must bring into force the National Honours and National Heroes Day Legislation.

A national sports programme must be established with the appropriate funding.

There should be increased incentives provided to our athletes.

**MY VISION**

- That there will be an unprecedented Bahamian Cultural Renaissance amongst all sectors of the cultural community which will result in the preservation of our uniqueness as a people and stimulate an abiding and sustained respect for things Bahamian. A Renaissance which will underpin our economic development strategy.

*What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...*
Bahamians are generally xenophobic. There is a real fear of the outside world and its apparent threats to our way of life. The reality, however, for our own prosperity and growth, is that we must engage the international community and we must be a regional leader in matters of national interests.

There is a bold new frontier for The Bahamas and we must now be prepared to look beyond our borders, to seek to have impact on and influence international dialogue on matters of trade and economic growth, social reform, integration, environmental stability and more.

We have spent our early years, and rightly so, making every effort to get our own house in order. If we are to achieve all that can be achieved for Bahamians we can only do so by engaging in and being a force on the international scene.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

We must become one of the leaders within our region; this will provide the base we need to impact on issues both within the region and internationally.

A policy of constructive engagement in international matters that complement our national objectives and interests must be undertaken.

Steps must be taken to strengthen our diplomatic ties with Africa, China and India.

Our geography must be a factor in the strengthening and deepening of our longstanding relationship with the United States.
We should also explore an economic federation with the Turks & Caicos Islands.

We must be fully prepared to both embrace and engage the world in dialogue. There must be an aggressive set of steps taken to ensure that we are not isolated on the global landscape.

MY VISION

• That the Bahamas is seen as a leader on issues. That we achieve this by taking manner in our approach to critical world issues. That we achieve this by the principled positions we take and effectively communicate on these issues. And that the territories of the region and nations across the globe seek the thinking of The Bahamas when considering regional and international issues.

What’s YOUR VISION... let’s talk...
We have been blessed with a stable democracy. Bahamians readily enjoy all of the basic and fundamental democratic rights of a people. Freedom of speech is widely enjoyed by all. By and large, our present Constitution has served us well.

The integrity and independence of our Judiciary is not open to question.

Without fear of contradiction it can be said that we are a free and democratic people.

However, there are some who suggest that there is a willingness on the part of politicians to engage in acts of victimization and political intimidation. To the extent that this exists we must put an end to it.

A BLUEPRINT for the FUTURE

All Bahamians are entitled to live in a free and just society.

We must embrace a system which allows for ongoing review of our Constitution.

The office of Ombudsman should be established to safeguard the rights of the Bahamian people and to address matters of political victimization and cronyism. We need all hands on deck, regardless of their political affiliation, if we are to move to greater prosperity for all.

Judicial independence must be enforced and enshrined by allowing for the Judiciary to manage its own affairs and budgetary resources.
Judges must reflect and understand the norms and customs of the Bahamian society.

Continued efforts must be made to educate all Bahamians about their Constitutional rights.

A Freedom of Information Act must be established to allow for easy access to critical information which is in the public interest.

**MY VISION**

- That Bahamians, our institutions and our systems all ensure a collective respect for our democracy and the Rule of Law. That there is one law for all Bahamians, regardless of one’s race, economic status, or political affiliation.

What’s **YOUR VISION**... let’s talk...
Thirty five years ago, the generation before us crossed a frontier that none believed we could even have reached. We are now in their future. We have achieved much since 1973. We have, however, collected along the way elements that we must rid ourselves of. But most importantly, my fellow Bahamians, it is now time. It is time to dream new dreams, to create a new vision.

Our future as a people and a country will be bright only if we are positioned to create a new frontier, a new vision, a line beyond the line we are now at. We must commit ourselves to bring The Bahamas to developed world status by 2020.

Our future as a people and a country will be bright if we create the programmes and initiatives to move towards that new frontier which presents new opportunities.

Our future as a people and a country will be bright only if we ensure that we all have the capacity through education, social support and economic empowerment to arrive at that new frontier in years to come.

Our future as a people and a country will be bright only if we seek to ingrain in every man, woman, boy and girl the values, morals and ethics that made it possible for us to arrive at this point in our history.

Our future as a people and a country will only be bright if we are able to arrive at that new frontier as one people, one family, with our history and the work of our fore-fathers and fore-mothers still in tact.
This BLUEPRINT is published to provoke discussion and dialogue in the Bahamian community. It is a call for reform, for a new approach to governance.

We must restore government to the people. We can achieve this by determining the national agenda. We can achieve this by working together towards a common goal…a common and shared vision. This can also be achieved by a collective pledge to uphold the honour of our nation, to recognize that our mandate is to bring about a radical change to our way of life and to positively transform our society. There is no greater obligation and duty for a people.

We can achieve a magnificent transformation when we share our individual visions and commence a national dialogue…to discover our national potential.

As a people we can come together to create a just, free and opportunity-filled society where the principles of fair play and justice prevail. We will be surprised by what can be achieved when a people are powerfully and intrinsically connected to defining and securing the very best for their nation.

We must pledge to be advocates for the betterment of the Bahamian people.

My commitment will always be to the Bahamian people. This is a personal pledge, one that transcends race, gender, age and politics.

I invite all Bahamians to recommit themselves to this noble mission…and to pledge to work together for the betterment of The Bahamas for the future generations of Bahamians.
You must be a part of the national conversation.

You must participate in the discussion about the future of The Bahamas.

You must join the chorus of Bahamians, in their homes, on the streets, in the media, in their Churches and community organizations and in their work environs who will be sharing their views and comments of how we can achieve much for our people.

You must enlist your voice to this critical national conversation about the FUTURE of The Bahamas.

And you must be ready to attend the events that are planned to allow you to share your vision and to create a roadmap for a better future for all.

And yes, you must be a volunteer to take the message and the conversation to others, always respecting their views and collaborating on issues where there are differences to find the common ground.

And you must record your views and log on to www.blueprintbahamas.com to interact in a meaningful discussion about The Bahamas by Bahamians.

And yes, you must be a part of this conversation as it comes to your community...as it embraces your national psyche and as it stimulates your abiding love for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

I can’t wait to hear your views...for you to share your VISION!
Raynard Rigby is a practising Barrister and Attorney-at-Law in the Chambers of Gibson, Rigby & Co. He is the former National Chairman of the Progressive Liberal Party (2002-2008). He served as an inaugural member of the School Board of the Government High School, his alma mater (1997-1999). He is also a former President of the Bahamas Family Planning Association (1999-2002) and the Alumni Association of the College of The Bahamas (1991-1992). He is a graduate of the College of The Bahamas (1989), the University of Western Ontario, Canada (1991) and the University of Leeds, United Kingdom (1994). He is married to Alexanderia Solomonia (nee Reckley) and has three daughters, Rhyan, Zarah and Ziah. He is an avid reader and a listener of jazz.