

PRESS STATEMENT

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**Negligence in the areas of Youth, Sports and Culture
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For immediate release

The minister with responsibilities for youth, sports, and culture, the Hon. Charles Maynard MP, is guilty of dereliction of duty. Given the large number of at-risk youths in our country and the impact this condition has on the social health of our society, Mr. Maynard has failed to demonstrate the requisite quality of leadership necessary to proactively provide viable alternatives to this vulnerable demographic through enhanced and progressive and sustained youth development programs. There is a demonstrated lack of concern and commitment in this critical area of national development and this is a serious indictment on the FNM government.

As an example, I draw to the attention of the public, the state of the Gambier Youth Path Project under the FNM:

GAMBIER AWARD WINNING YOUTH PATH PROJECT REPLACED BY WEB-SHOP

Bahamians would be aware that the Gambier Youth Path Project written by Ms. Simone Bowe was awarded a UNESCO grant (one of only two awarded to the Caribbean) with the official launch of the program in December 2003.



The project was intended to create socio-economic empowerment to disadvantaged youth in needy communities. The Government of The Bahamas joint ventured with UNESCO to implement the project with UNEXCO providing requisite funding for the project while the Ministry of Youth agreed to provide rental accommodations to facilitate the project. It was anticipated that the program would have needed minimal assistance from Government.

A number of training initiatives for young residents particularly in the area of straw craft, entrepreneurship, dance and music were conducted. Youth were exposed to innovative ways of cultivating the indigenous resources of The Bahamas, the tales of our folk lore, the foods we eat, and other facets we consider uniquely Bahamian. Further these young people were taught how to turn these skills into economic opportunities, with emphasis placed on enhancing both the cultural and economic values, and how to foster means for sustainable tourism.

Scores of Gambier youth benefited from this project and phase two of the project was launched in 2005 by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura and Sir Sidney Poitier, the Bahamian delegate to UNESCO.

Classes were conducted including training in straw doll manufacturing, production of decorative items using sand, shells, native seeds, coconut husks and other natural materials inclusive of Androsia print. Native jewelry and accessory manufacturing and other souvenir production resulted. The training culminated with an exhibition in Rawson Square where participants were able to both showcase and sell their creations to Bahamians and tourists alike. Indeed, a few of the participants became active in various aspects of the tourism business and the program grew incrementally.

I now submit photographic proof as to what has become of the UNESCO Gambier Youth Path Project. The sign to the building remains erected. However, the activity in the building has strayed from an internationally recognized youth program founded jointly with a United Nations agency to a local Web Shop.





In the public interest, I register my concern of a continuing pattern where Government sponsored programs for young Bahamians are being down-sized, aborted, or discontinued by this current Government of The Bahamas without explanation. The government must provide a full and clear explanation of this policy position and articulate their viable alternative; this is in the public interest. Of particular concern is:

1. The Cancellation of CARIFESTA
2. The elimination of the National Youth Service Program in North Andros (a program assisted and supported by the International Development Bank)
3. The lack of adherence and commensurate funding for National Sporting, Youth, and Cultural Federations

4. The reduced participation and obvious lack of concern for the success of Junior Junkanoo. I attach a photo illustrating the attendance at the 2009 Junior Junkanoo parade, taken at 9 p.m. for your perusal.



5. Mismanagement and neglect of Sporting facilities accessible to our youth throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. In this regard I attach for your perusal photos of the Betty Kelly-Kenning swim complex which is obviously in a state of disrepair and the advice suggests that the cost to repair will be in excess of \$400,000.00. This could have been avoided with a proper Management/Maintenance initiative.





I implore all Bahamians to agitate for better for the Youth of our Nation. These issues are but a few which impact our young people directly. They deserve better as indeed our youth are our most valuable resource.