

The Tribune Limited

NULLIUS ADDICTUS JURARE IN VERBA MAGISTRIS
 "Being Bound to Swear to The Dogmas of No Master"

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Published daily Monday to Friday
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If Bahamians are so good...

A FRIEND of this newspaper recently took a cruise aboard one of the most elegant cruise ships to dock at Nassau. What she saw as the ship made its way into Nassau harbour and when it docked made her embarrassed to be Bahamian, she admitted. The confession did not come easily and it was, she added, the first time she had felt that way since the early 1980's when The Bahamas was humiliated by being caught red-handed, Colombian flag flying boldly over Norman's Cay in the Exumas, the country tapped as the leading illicit drug transshipment point in the hemisphere.

While there is no comparison between a country run amok by providing cover for drug dealers and one that turns a blind eye to how it treats millions of visitors a year, there are similarities. What you ignore can hurt you even more than what you confront.

Some 3.7 million cruise passengers visited The Bahamas in 2016, making this the busiest country for cruise travel in the region, more than double the number of visitors to the next two busiest, US Virgin Islands with over 1.7 million and Cayman with 1.7 million. There is little we do to lure those passengers. Cruise lines pay for advertising and online sites vie for booking business. Cruise lines deliver passengers to our front door and, according to this latest report, we show them something that looks more like a back room in need of restoration than a living room ready for hospitality. Are we sending a message to nearly four million visitors a year that you are invited but not welcome? Are we showing them a taste of Nassau that leaves little appetite to return as stayover guests in resorts, lodges or airbnbs?

We were not on the cruise but her report was so detailed and compelling that we have decided to let her describe what she saw and experienced. Here is what she experienced in her own words.

It was the morning of June 2, Labour Day, and after several days at sea and at other ports, I was excited about docking in Nassau, strangely enough, even looking forward to finding a place for a good boiled fish on a holiday, not that we had not eaten enough aboard the ship. Let's not even talk about that. But the taste for a good boil quickly turned into a queasy sick feeling from the time we entered the harbour. On the port side was the lighthouse in need of a little TLC and some identifying signage, but not horrendous. To starboard, the first building to come into clear view close-up was an old metal warehouse, rusty from the roof down, crying out for a sanding and paint job and maybe lettering on the roof Welcome to Nassau, We're happy you're here, Or Welcome to Nassau, Founded 1670, or Welcome to The Bahamas, Birthplace of the New World. Imagine how many photos with that wording could have been posted and shared and the free advertising for The Bahamas. What would it take to paint one building?

Walking from the ship to get to Bay Street you are herded like cattle into and through Festival Place, but as that build-

ing has been closed and "under renovation" for two years or more (longer than it took to build the last phase of Atlantis), why are officials crowding everyone through it? Again, like getting to the front door by way of a garage. Signage that it is under renovation is on the other side. Look up and see the holes and rotten wood in the eaves, shudder and move on with the crowd, jostling and being jostled until you get to the centre for what I quickly dubbed the three h's - hassling, harassing and hustling. One taxi driver wanted \$50 for a ride down the road. His license should be pulled. Some poor couple, not knowing better, will be taken for that ride and they will be one more family to cross Bahamas off their list of places they want to return to.

Thousands of people were lost, like a meandering tribe, looking in every direction, probably as relieved as we were to have escaped the unwanted approaches from tour bus and taxi drivers, but unlike us, lost as to where to go next.

We knew the hustlers were simply trying to make a living but the free-for-all was not something we experienced at any other port and it was unsettling to us, perhaps frightening to others.

Everywhere we looked, we could see room for improvement. It was written all over what was not there. There was no directional signage by the Churchill Building or Parliament Street (this way to Historic Nassau). No historical markers or plaques on historic buildings.

The tragedy is that Nassau has so much to offer it should be more than a port that is easy to get to, it should be a port the public wants to visit time and again, whether by ship, private yacht or air. Historic buildings, forts, dive sites, beaches, churches, sets where famous movies were made, luxury shops, Ardasra, the Botanical Gardens, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, the crafts shops, cigar and chocolate factories and museum on West Hill Street, Fish Fry, Montagu Beach, Doongalik Studio, snorkeling, so much to see and do. Yet, none of that was mentioned in the port lecture, misleadingly called Highlights of Nassau but the overwhelming vast majority of which was devoted to the highlights of a particular diamond store.

So while official warnings have been issued cruise passengers about crime, as a cruise passenger and a Bahamian landing in my own home port, I can only say the bigger crime is that we do not have a clue how to show the world how beautiful our country and the Bahamian people really are. It is the crime of neglect. We are again reminded that what you ignore can have greater consequences than what you confront.

The good news is that this is one ship that can be righted with very little cost and just a whole fresh set of eyes and energy. We believe the government is up to the task but should involve new and experienced partners as well as trusted colleagues. It is time for the prescription lens on a very old pair of glasses to get a clearer view and 21st Century vision.

Time to resign

EDITOR, The Tribune.

AFTER an election, political nominees to various positions in civil government are supposed to resign immediately, leaving it up to the incoming Government to decide their fate in that position.

Has the Ambassador to the US, High Commissioner to the UK, Canada, People's Republic of China and CARICOM, been required to resign, or are they on the job still being paid? Perhaps no one understands custom and requirement.

From a news insert on ZNS, clearly the political appointee our Consul General, Miami is still on the job. No doubt he was a PLP

political nominee.

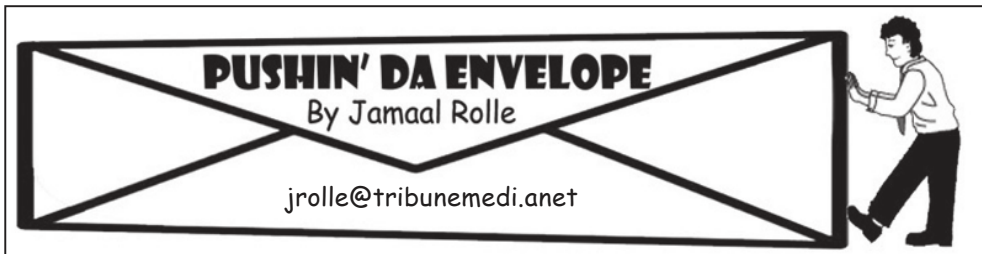
Well in the last months of the infamous PLP Government, so much was made of our developing Diplomatic Relations with Qatar - so much promise, but look at the top news today that Saudi Arabia, Egypt and UAE have all cancelled diplomatic relations with Qatar, because of their support to terrorism, ISIS and al-Qaeda. This is well known but so is that a number of rich Saudis have been doing the same thing. Supporting the Assad regime in Syria who breach Human Rights daily.

Are we going to re-look at our relations with Qatar as a result - surely we should not be seen as recognizing a

country who sponsors terrorism?

A quick note on FINANCE - Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis was the Chair of The Finance Committee. Very clearly, he did a useless job there, as surely he should have been on top of what is now exposed by Minister Peter Turnquest, as to our massive indebtedness to borrow \$750m. I suspect the good Doctor is fundamentally ill-equipped for the responsibility, as in Opposition he seemingly did not carry out his Constitutional duties. Should we be worried? I suppose so!

W. THOMPSON
 Nassau,
 June 5, 2017.



LANDFILL "URGENT HEALTH HAZARD"



Hurricane is coming!

EDITOR, The Tribune.

THE stark reality is Bahamians do not take hurricanes seriously. The seriousness of the impending dangers sometimes do not hit us until we hear the wind blowing, the trees bending and the power is off.

After the wind gusts up to fifty plus miles per hour, we say, the hurricane must be coming this way. But by then it is too late to make any adjustments that would give ourselves a chance.

We even say, that we are not securing our property because the last time it did not come this way. We gamble, we procrastinate, we play games with our families lives, we risk our lives. Then we blame all and sundry for our foolishness.

Bahamians are a peculiar people!

June 1 is the beginning of the hurricane season. There is no reason to be surprised because it happens every year.

So why don't we routinely prepare ourselves, no, we need to be reminded, we need to be spoon fed. We cannot see it is on us if we do make sure our families are protected.

We hold on to traditions and old habits that many times get us in a bit of trouble, cause us some unnecessary stress and make us uncomfortable. We reluctantly accept change and therefore get stuck doing things over and over that are not beneficial.

Last year, we experienced the wrath of a powerful hurricane. Matthew was relentless, wreaking havoc on many islands.

Some people, for the most part, did not heed the Met Office warnings. We said, that the hurricane was not coming this way, but Matthew came howling with a mighty show of force. It caught us unprepared.

Insanity is doing things the same way, expecting a different result.

Instructions by the authorities, (NEMA) to evacuate fell on deaf ears. The system did not lend itself to mandatory evacuation, thus the hardships and terror experienced by many. The police, moving forward, should order mandatory evacuation.

This begs the question, why do we not take hurricanes seriously? Why do we always wait for the last min-

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ute? Can some of the damage be avoided? Should we change the way we do things?

Why are we buying supplies when the winds have reached gale-force status.

I thought that the best way to counter some of the negative results is to offer my unwarranted advice, in an effort for all of us to at least give ourselves a fighting chance of surviving a hurricane, or minimising the damage.

This is the beginning of the hurricane season, let us quickly move into preparation mode.

We should start stocking up on the dry items such as canned goods that have no expiration dates now, while there is no pressure and supplies are in goodly numbers.

Batteries, lamps, first aid kits, transistor radios, search lights, etc., should be purchased now, because they will be cheaper and in great supply.

The sensible thing to do is to start doing the necessary renovations to your homes, fastening windows, doors, and getting rid of loose items that could pose a problem in high winds. Starting to secure your house now, will eliminate the chaotic activity such as crowded streets and potential catastrophe which usually are associated with hurricanes in The Bahamas.

The purchase of plywood and other items now will prevent the lack of supply and the risk of merchants price gouging and exploitation of desperate citizens who are in search of supplies.

Doing these things well in advance will give residents ample time to "batten up" before the weather conditions deteriorates.

Securing physical structures in high winds is not only dangerous but could be fatal.

The merchant should not be open and we should not want to be on the streets putting ourselves and everyone else in grave danger, after the last warning is given that all residents should be in and remain indoors.

Hurricane shelters must be identified, made ready and known to the public. The public should be constantly reminded so that the locations become familiar.

This gives the potential

shelter occupants a full understanding of where they are going and how they are going to get there. If the residents adhere to the information disseminated, this will prevent them from increasing anxiety, rising blood pressure and from making unnecessary calls, clogging emergency telephone lines.

The hospital and clinics should start the necessary preparation with supplies and training for the uneventful. The organization, synchronization of information and coordination by NEMA must be methodical but timely, well in advance to avoid confusion.

The clinics that are in proximity to particular neighbourhoods should be identified and information and the public made aware. Most Bahamians do not know where these places are.

Constant reminders of shelters and clinics must begin far earlier than before, increasing the frequency as it comes closer to an impending hurricane.

The Red Cross plays an integral part. The role that is played is significant. The experience from the organisation is invaluable and should be front and centre in the planning stages.

Hurricanes are devastating! It destroys property and sometimes changes our lives forever. Apart from the physical structures, the mental and psychological scars sometimes last forever.

We cannot risk allowing personalities or egos to interfere with how serious we become with working together, pooling our knowledge and time and effort toward making us all safe. We could do better by genuinely offering ourselves to lending a helping hand either pre-hurricane or post-hurricane or both.

We found out that we help ourselves even more by listening to the authorities, carrying out the instructions, and when evacuations are suggested, it is not a choice it is a must.

Losing your life to save your house is simply asinine.

Finally we must be our brothers keeper, we must not only secure ourselves but our neighbours too.

Saving lives is paramount.

IVOINE W. INGRAHAM
 Nassau,
 June 6, 2017.