

NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY FOR THE BAHAMAS

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SECTION I – STATEMENT OF POSITION

1. Purpose

This document is a practical manifesto that encapsulates where culture in The Bahamas is today, where we want to go, and how we use the culture to get us there. We believe that culture is too important to be left to political and practical expediency. Culture is unique. You can pick and choose economic models, but cultural models are unique to each national context, hence the need for a specific national cultural policy. This document is an expression as well as a determiner of the national identity of the country.

Its purpose is:

1. to safeguard Bahamian cultural heritage;
2. to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
3. to give a coherent strategic national context for planning and decision-making about culture;
4. to ensure respect for the cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
5. to utilize international cooperation and assistance in the development and promotion of Bahamian culture.

The word “Policy” suggests the establishment of a position in respect of a particular issue, a commitment to approach matters concerning that issue in a particular way. Once a Policy has been established, it creates the ability for those contemplating action in that field to predict the response to their effort, and to avoid the frustration of actions that fall outside that Policy statement.

The Cultural Commission has as one of its responsibilities the recommendation of policies that the Government might build into its program for the creation of legislation. This is based upon the belief that the holistic development of any individual includes the development of their bodies, their social skills and their self-concept. This self-concept, which is the basis for the development of positive or negative approaches to life, depends to a large extent on the influences of cultural activity, and is therefore fundamental to the development of the whole person, and therefore the whole nation.

In recognition, therefore, of the importance of cultural activity to the development of the nation, the Government of the Bahamas hereby establishes the following Policies:

- 1. Government will utilize its resources and facilities to facilitate the production and display of cultural activity.**
- 2. It will maintain facilities for the preservation, conservation and perpetuation of existing cultural traditions.**
- 3. Ensure the effective production of events that offer opportunities for the development, display and marketing of Bahamian cultural product.**
- 4. Provide opportunities for the constant expansion of cultural activity as a device for both social development and commercial activity.**
- 5. Establish the institutional framework necessary to provide permanent support for the development of the agents of cultural production.**
- 6. Provide incentives and other inducements for the promotion of cultural events and display, especially through the media.**

These Policies are to be embodied in an administrative structure that provides for the partnership between Government and the private sector.

2. Definitions

2.1. Definition of culture

Culture has been defined as “***That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [humans] as [members] of society.***” In The Bahamas, “culture” is usually regarded as activities and products that are often considered to be separate from the real business of life. However, **culture** is the entire body of knowledge and activity that defines a people.

Culture, therefore, is more than a set of activities and products created by a people. It is the entire way of life of a group, from those things that are consciously and collectively recognized and celebrated, to those things that occur unconsciously in the lives of a group of people.

2.2. Definition of and Background to the Cultural Policy of The Bahamas

In a fluid society affected by tourism, immigration, and other global activities, a well-defined culture is crucial for identity and development.

2.2.1. Aspirations and Limitations

This document WILL:

- provide a description of Bahamian culture;
- work towards delineating unique elements of Bahamian culture;
- provide a blueprint/roadmap for the place of culture in national development.

This document WILL NOT:

- provide a blueprint for cultural development for all time.

Culture is ever-changing. This document attempts to describe the state of Bahamian culture at a particular juncture in space and time. This document cannot and will not speak for all Bahamians in all eras. In order for it to be effective, it will need to be adopted, implemented, reviewed, re-evaluated and revised in a timely fashion.

2.2.2. Historical survey of Bahamian cultural policy documents

The development of and focus on Bahamian culture is not new. Since Independence, numerous official statements have been devised regarding national cultural development. These include:

2.2.2.1. *Shafer Report 1986*

UNESCO sponsored survey of Bahamian culture and recommendations for the creation and implementation of a policy;

2.2.2.2. *Senate Hearings on Culture 1992-3*

Compilation of documents produced by a series of hearings on Bahamian culture given to a Senate Committee headed by Sen. Fred Mitchell;

2.2.2.3. *Adderley/Lockhart policy 1995*

Draft cultural policy document prepared by Director of Culture Cleophas Adderley and Deputy Director of Culture Kayla Lockhart-Edwards.

2.2.3. Outcomes of these policy documents

Few, if any, of the recommendations from any of these documents have been implemented, and the documents themselves have been shelved.

2.2.4. International precedent

Culture has been recognized by the international community as being central to nationhood, especially in the context of globalization, and central to economic development.

In this regard, countries throughout the region and the world are devising cultural policies to act as adjuncts to their social and economic developmental programmes.

Several blueprints of those policy programmes exist, and were surveyed in preparation for writing this document. These include all cultural policy documents prepared within or designed for the English-speaking Caribbean, to wit:

2.2.4.1. UNESCO

UNESCO has placed special priority on the creation and updating of the cultural policies of member states with a view to strengthening those policies as tools for development.

One of UNESCO's paramount activities is the lending of assistance to Member States in updating their cultural policies in order to meet their new cultural needs arising out of globalization. Special attention is paid to the institutional aspects of the culture sector and its links with development policies involving education, science, communication, health and tourism.

2.2.4.2. CARICOM

CARICOM has provided the definition of the ideal Caribbean person as someone who, among other things,

- is imbued with a respect for human life since it is the foundation on which all the other desired values must rest;
- is emotionally secure with a high level of self confidence and self esteem;
- sees ethnic, religious and other diversity as a source of potential strength and richness;
- is aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment;
- has a strong appreciation of family and kinship values, community cohesion, and moral issues including responsibility for and accountability to self and community;
- has an informed respect for the cultural heritage;
- demonstrates multiple literacies independent and critical thinking, questions the beliefs and practices of past and present and brings this to bear on the innovative application of science and technology to problems solving;

- demonstrates a positive work ethic;
- values and displays the creative imagination in its various manifestations and nurture its development in the economic and entrepreneurial spheres in all other areas of life;
- has developed the capacity to create and take advantage of opportunities to control, improve, maintain and promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well being and to contribute to the health and welfare of the community and country;
- nourishes in him/herself and in others, the fullest development of each person's potential without gender stereotyping and embraces differences and similarities between females and males as a source of mutual strength.

CARICOM cultural policies are designed to foreground and capitalize on these virtues.

2.2.5. ST. LUCIA

Following the CARICOM model, St. Lucia has designed and published a cultural policy for its development.

The St. Lucian policy is largely aspirational, providing a wish list of activities, but failing to provide recommendations for their implementation.

2.2.6. JAMAICA

Following its own indigenous history of cultural policies, Jamaica has drafted and published its fourth cultural policy since 1959. This policy is not only aspirational, but it also surveys all cultural agencies, makes recommendations for development, provides timelines and relational charts, and supplies estimated budgets.

The Bahamian Cultural Policy Document takes all these into consideration, as well as the Plan of Action to develop the Creative Economy published by Barbados.

3. Theoretical perspective

This Bahamian Cultural Policy Document makes reference to specific cultural theories that enable a view of culture that goes beyond the area of performance and other tangible cultural activity. These theories seek to place Bahamian culture in an international and local perspective.

3.1. Bahamian Cultural identity

Bahamian cultural identity is profoundly affected by two major forces that have both sustained and retarded the development of a coherent approach to culture. These are the **fundamental orality of Bahamian cultural expressions**, and the **fragmented geography of the Bahamian archipelago**.

3.1.1. The Bahamas: an oral society

The Bahamas is a highly oral society. This is a fundamental trait that applies to all sectors of Bahamian society. The traditional orality of the original European and African settlers has been reinforced through history by the fragmented geography of the archipelago, a reliance on maritime and subsistence activities, and the historical dominance of a closed ruling class meant that for much of Bahamian history extended literacy provided no real advantage to Bahamians. As a result, the development of an influential intellectual class did not take place until after Independence.

This traditional reliance on strongly oral means of communication, which affected European and African populations of The Bahamas alike, has meant that Bahamians, while a highly literate people, tend to value certain traits associated with orality more highly than traits associated with literacy. According to researchers such as Walter Ong and Daniel Chandler, these include:

- subjectivity rather than objectivity (lack of objectivity)
- concretism rather than abstraction (lack of analysis)
- concern with the present rather than with the past (lack of history)
- focus on particularism rather than on generalities (lack of critical discussion)
- conservatism rather than radicalism in ideas (conscious resistance to change)
- rapid change in lifestyles and activities rather than repetition of traditional norms (unconscious adaptation to change)

In a globalizing world, however, dominant ideas and technologies, while promoting a culture of secondary orality, are controlled by highly literate cultures. In order to make a mark on this world, the traditional orality of Bahamian life must be transformed, and Bahamians must be fully integrated into the contemporary literate-oral world.

3.1.2. The Bahamian Archipelago

Unlike the majority of countries in the Caribbean region, and indeed in the Americas, The Bahamas is a nation consisting of not one land-mass, but several.

The Bahamian archipelago covers some 225,000 square miles (roughly 362,000 km. sq.) of one of the most strategic positions in the Atlantic Ocean, stretching from the Florida coast to the north shore of Haiti, bordered on the west by Cuba, straddling the Tropic of Cancer.

Altogether there are over three thousand islands, rocks and cays, totalling approximately 5,500 square miles (8,850 km. sq.) of land. None of these is very large. The majority of them are long and thin, many only four or five miles wide at the most. Roughly thirty are inhabited and comprise about twenty distinctive administrative and social districts, few of which are limited to a single land-mass. Nassau, the capital, inhabited by an estimated 200,000 people, is found on New Providence, a mere 80 square miles (130 km. sq.) of land.

As a result, Bahamian cultural identities, like the country itself, are multiple and fluid. Each island is unique within the whole, and Bahamians have developed the art of negotiating interconnection and difference.

Bahamians inhabit not only a physical archipelago, but they also navigate identities through a cognitive archipelago of possibilities. When the anthropologist Susan Love Brown undertook fieldwork on Cat Island during the late 1980s, she discovered that

Cat Islanders had a great love for their home island and identified themselves as being from Cat Island to the rest of the world. But, equally obvious, was their identity as Bahamians and their tendency to bring this up to me especially in the presence of someone who was not a Bahamian, such as a person of Jamaican or Haitian origin. They spoke quite plainly of going to Nassau as 'going to town,' thus placing themselves in a rural-urban or center-periphery relationship ... Cat Islanders are conscious of the modern way of doing things. They are not isolated from the world. They come and go both from Nassau and the United States and the world. (Brown 1992: 2-3)

To believe that Bahamian cultural identity is a monolithic expression is to do a gross injustice to the range of Bahamian cultural expressions.

This cultural policy document seeks to recognize and celebrate those differences, while accepting them all as various facets of a rich and vibrant whole.

3.2. International approaches to Culture

3.2.1. UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage

The fundamental orality of Bahamian culture means that the vast majority of Bahamian cultural expressions are intangible, rather than tangible. Bahamian identity is not contained in documents and archives, in statues and museums, or in historical monuments. Rather, Bahamian cultural identity rests in practices that are intangible and at the same time resilient, difficult to catalogue, and vulnerable to numerous other forces.

In recognition of this type of cultural heritage, UNESCO in 2003 passed the International Convention on Intangible Heritage to help safeguard the oral heritage of the world.

Under this convention,

“intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith — that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The “intangible cultural heritage” is manifested inter alia in the following domains:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;*
- (b) performing arts;*
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;*
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;*
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.*

In recognition of the strength of Bahamian intangible cultural heritage, this cultural policy adopts wholesale the UNESCO definition of that heritage, and seeks to embody that definition in a policy that will ensure

the preservation and continuity of Bahamian intangible cultural practices as well as Bahamian tangible heritage.

3.3. Cultural Identity and National Identity

One of the main purposes of this Cultural Policy Document is to provide a means by which the Bahamian nation can carve out a strong and vibrant national identity. The Bahamian situation is profoundly shaped by its colonial history and its postcolonial status. Any cultural policy must recognize and take into account these facts.

3.3.1. Bahamian National Identity

Students of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson have argued that nations are essentially “imagined political communities” whose members delineate their identities according to a series of unifying symbols and mythologies that unite them despite the fact that most individuals never meet all of the other members of that community. This commonality distinguishes the members of the nation from the members of other similar groups; nations are not only imagined, but they are also distinct and sovereign. The concepts of *invention* or *imagination* highlight the concept that nations do not spring from a single primordial origin, but is rather the result of the conscious activities of some, or all, of its members.

The Bahamas is part of a region whose original populations were decimated within a generation of the first landfall of Columbus. This situation is further challenged by the fact that the Bahama Islands are an archipelago, thus making the question of territory complex, and the nation exists on the edge of several large and influential cultures.

Bahamian independence in 1973 was less the outcome of a protracted nationalist anti-colonial struggle than the culmination of decades of fighting by the black majority for political representation. The main conflict over independence took place between those Bahamians who believed that a black government could lead an independent state and those who were sceptical. The struggle for Majority Rule, equality of opportunity, and quality of life were important elements in the Independence efforts. Since then, however, the construction of the Bahamian nation has been a conscious, governing-party-generated movement rather than a single long-term campaign of national awareness, and the question of race and the relative location of Bahamians of differing descent in the national landscape continue to be debated.

The development of Bahamian national identity has suffered from a general lack of direction. The fundamental orality of Bahamian culture has meant that the generally accepted cornerstones of ‘imagination’ and ‘invention’ — literature, ‘myths’ of nation, monuments, museums and the reification of history — while not absent in the Bahamas, are only marginally important. This state of affairs has created a generation of young citizens who have been poorly exposed to their heritage and history. At this time, the creation of a vibrant national identity requires concerted, conscious direction. This Cultural Policy Document serves as one tool to aid in this development.

3.3.2. Postcolonialism

As mentioned above, the Bahamian situation is profoundly shaped by its postcolonial status. Its colonial history has contributed to the same lack of confidence in local cultural and national expressions that plague other postcolonial nations. Further, its position on the border of the United States of America has ensured that these attitudes have not declined over time.

One of the major challenges for any developing nation in the global context is the balance between sovereignty and national identity and the influence of a pervasive global culture that is increasingly homogeneous and American in flavour. The Bahamas, on the very doorstep of the United States of America, is no stranger to these challenges.

Because of this, and because of the unique geography of the country and its location at the crossroads of the New World, Bahamians occupy shifting ground. Bahamians negotiate numerous different identities while remaining within the confines of their state. Any Cultural Policy Document must therefore take these facts into account.

4. SWOTS of current situation

Having placed Bahamian culture in its proper historical, international, and geographical context, we have chosen to deconstruct the current cultural status in The Bahamas in terms of **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTS)**. These are considered below.

4.1. Strengths

The strengths of Bahamian culture are delineated below. Where there are challenges posed by the current status of specific manifestations of that culture, they are listed as such.

4.1.1. Cultural

The Bahamas is rich in cultural resources. These are primarily intangible, given the colonial past and the oral tradition of the present described above. Moreover, the preservation and promotion of tangible cultural heritage have already been addressed by legislation creating the Antiquities, Monuments and Museums Corporation and the Clifton Authority. The intangible cultural heritage of The Bahamas, however, has yet to be addressed.

This heritage is both rich and under threat from various forces, both local and global.

In making this the centre of our cultural policy, The Bahamas stands at the forefront of global cultural activity, as evidence by the 2003 adoption by UNESCO of the Convention on Intangible Cultural Policy.

Bahamian intangible cultural heritage includes the following:

4.1.1.1. *Junkanoo*

Despite the tendency to administer Junkanoo as a single major event, and despite the fact that the manifestation of Junkanoo that is nationally recognized is an exclusively urban tradition, Junkanoo remains it is clearly the best-developed cultural resource in The Bahamas, and the most widespread engine of cultural productivity.

In listing Junkanoo as a cultural asset, we wish to make explicit that Junkanoo is fundamentally a creative art, and is in fact the amalgamation of all the oral creative arts. We wish further to assert that Nassauvian Junkanoo incorporates in its creation an internal critical discourse that has fuelled the development of the parade.

Junkanoo is a living cultural tradition whose vibrancy may be used as a model for national cultural rejuvenation. We wish to emphasize, however, that it is the **process** involved in the creation and maintenance of this cultural tradition is as central to national importance, as the product we so celebrate.

Formally, Junkanoo incorporates most oral and performative expressions of culture. These include music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts, each of which has its unique place in the canon of Bahamian cultural expression.

4.1.1.1.1. Challenges

- Despite the national assertion that Junkanoo is a cultural event, the overall focus of Junkanoo's administration to date has been on the production of the annual parades and the overseeing of the central competition.
- Comparatively little emphasis has thus far been placed on research, preservation, and training.
- There is a tendency among Junkanoo leaders and administrators to insist that Junkanoo creative expression is distinct from other creative endeavours and cannot be judged according to universal cultural standards.
- The lack of promotion of the linkages between Junkanoo and its constituent art forms (visual arts, music, theatre, dance) risks the stagnation of the artistic development of the Junkanoo festival. It also risks the continuity within the festival of indigenous Junkanoo art forms such as fringing, rhythmic variety, texture and spontaneity, and even dance.

Action points

- Creation of a Junkanoo institute
- Promotion of cross-sectoral interaction and dialogue

4.1.1.2. *Indigenous musical traditions*

In the global context, the indigenous musical traditions of The Bahamas, and particularly of Andros and Cat Island, are more central than any other Bahamian form of expression to the understanding of Bahamian identity in the global context. Thanks to the international renown of musicians such as Joseph Spence and Tony "Exuma the Obeah Man" McKay, Bahamian folk music forms are not only recognized abroad, but have served as the foundation of many developments in the folk and blues music genres. These traditions are waning at home, but have not yet died out.

Unlike Junkanoo, the continuity of these indigenous musical traditions is not assured. This may be because, unlike Junkanoo, the majority of these traditions are family island and rural, and as such they are impacted by larger questions of urbanization, modernization and globalization. It may also be because the national tendency has been to

focus almost exclusively on the development and funding of Junkanoo to the effective exclusion of most other Bahamian cultural forms.

This tendency to focus national cultural politics and discourse on Junkanoo has placed these traditions at great risk. The purpose of this cultural policy, therefore, is to recognize the centrality of these musical traditions and to delineate them as follows.

4.1.1.2.1. Non-exhaustive list of Bahamian musical forms

4.1.1.2.1.1. Rake-n-scrape

4.1.1.2.1.2. Goombay

4.1.1.2.1.3. Rhyming

4.1.1.2.1.4. Anthems

4.1.1.2.1.5. Secular songs

4.1.1.2.1.6. Narrative songs

4.1.1.2.1.7. Ringplay

4.1.1.2.1.8. Junkanoo

Action points

- Develop school curricula to familiarize schoolchildren with indigenous Bahamian musical forms
- Develop programmes of widespread public education
- Mandate a national percentage of Bahamian music to be played on all local radio stations, and make this a condition of broadcast licensing

4.1.1.3. Contemporary Musical Traditions

All modern English Caribbean rhythms (including hip-hop and rap) can be described with reference to the accented notes within a sixteenth-note phrase. Other Caribbean nations have studied their musical traditions and identified what makes them unique. Students of Bahamian music have identified similar variations that mark specific Bahamian forms, but these differentiations are not being disseminated. Bahamian music is very open to influences from around the region.

Action point

- As the difference between Bahamian music and other English Caribbean music is simply one of rhythmic accent, it is imperative that contemporary Bahamian music be studied, and the information disseminated.

4.1.1.4 Oral traditions

Music is only one part of Bahamian oral traditions. The spoken word holds an important place in Bahamian culture as well, particular in the areas of folk tales, riddles, proverbs, and stories told in song.

4.1.1.4.1 Ol' Story

4.1.1.4.2 Proverbs and riddles

4.1.1.4.3 Songstory

4.1.1.5 Language

Bahamians speak a wide variety of nation-languages, currently known as Bahamian dialects. This dialect is not monolithic, and varies widely across the archipelago. Bahamian nation language needs to be recognized and valourized and incorporated in national discussions.

4.1.1.6 Craftwork

Bahamian craft expresses the full range of Bahamian life, and is influenced by all sectors of the Bahamian population. It is the cultural form that has the tightest links with the tourist industry. It is possible to argue that tourism has kept this sector alive. Not all Bahamian crafts are equal in this regard, however. It is important, therefore, to list these from a cultural and not a commercial perspective.

4.1.1.6.1 Straw work

The Nassau Straw Market is one of the central symbols of the national tourist product. Even in the current absence of a permanent building, the Straw Market remains the most visited tourist attraction in the country. It is worth noting, however, that at the time of writing, the vast majority of craft in the Straw Market is not Bahamian.

Bahamian indigenous straw work has been recognized as being among the highest quality and most diverse example of Caribbean

basketry. Bahamian straw products utilize a diverse range of materials and draw upon a wide resource of cultural traditions, including Lucayan and Taino techniques, Seminole forms, African forms and European designs.

Straw work is also one of the most enduring and important economic endeavours for Bahamian women.

4.1.1.6.2. Woodcarving

Like straw work, woodcarving is central to the tourist product, and exists side by side with straw work in tourist spaces. Bahamian woodcarvers draw on various traditions, primary among which is the African expression.

4.1.1.6.3. Boatbuilding

Boatbuilding exists throughout The Bahamas as an extension of basic subsistence activities and as part of the sport of native sloop sailing. Boats are so central to Bahamian economic life that each island has its own design tradition. Currently, the island of Abaco is world-renowned as a producer of top-class boats, while Long Island and Ragged Island are locally recognized as producers of top-class sailing sloops. We believe it is important to recognize and support the diversity in this tradition.

4.1.1.6.4. Thatching

4.1.1.6.5. Quilting

4.1.1.6.6. Needlework

4.1.1.6.7. Miniature Junkanoo artefacts

4.1.1.6.8. Shell work

4.1.1.7. Architecture

Indigenous Bahamian architecture is a concrete response to the peculiarities of the social, political and ecological environment in which Bahamians found themselves. Over the centuries, Bahamians adapted the techniques they brought with them from Africa, Europe and the Americas to create a building style that is specifically crafted to withstand heat, humidity, sun, hurricanes, floods, and the occasional cold weather.

Antiquities & monuments

Challenges

- Far too little emphasis has been placed on valuing and preserving traditional architectural styles. Although isolated architects have taken it as a mandate to do this, and although architectural schools in South Florida have recognized the value of the Bahamian style and teach it in their schools, hiring Bahamian architects to do so, the Bahamian state has ignored the richness of the Bahamian architectural tradition. Official buildings are designed according to principles imported wholesale from North America, without any real consideration of the needs they have to fill or the demands of the Bahamian environment, and while there is legislation that theoretically prevents the demolition of historic buildings, there is no enforcement of the law and the architectural tradition, particularly in New Providence, is in the process of being erased.

4.1.1.8 Land tenure patterns

Bahamian land tenure takes four main forms: Crown land, commonage, generation property, and private property. It is possible to draw a rough geographical correlation between them. Private property governs the method of land tenure in those areas which are the most populated, and which find themselves closest to the capital; generation property tends to be located on more remote areas of the archipelago; and Crown land may be located anywhere. What is perhaps most interesting about these, however, is that while private property and Crown land are regulated using documents and the central legal and administrative systems — governed, that is, from the capital — generation property is organised locally. It is arguable, therefore, that the convention of generation property provides Bahamians who live on the bureaucratic margins of the archipelago with access to land that they might otherwise find difficult to obtain.

4.1.1.8.1 Crown Land

Crown land symbolizes the authority of the state over the rights of individuals, and refers to land owned specifically by the government of The Bahamas.

4.1.1.8.2 Commonage

Commonage refers to land owned by the community and enshrined in law. This is an extension of British land laws, and affects only a few islands in the Bahamian archipelago.

4.1.1.8.3. Generation Property

Generation property is the Bahamian name given to customary communal land tenure patterns. Generation property, known as family land throughout the Caribbean, is recognized as a major cultural resource. In The Bahamas, the widespread holding of generation property has also served as a major source of economic and political independence and local autonomy.

4.1.1.8.4. Real Estate

Real estate refers to the private ownership of land. The private ownership of land is a marker of political and social status, as well as serving as a considerable economic resource.

4.1.1.9 Theatre

Of all the literary arts, it is drama that is most fully developed in The Bahamas, and particularly during the second half of the twentieth century, The Bahamas produced some of the most sophisticated theatre in the region. Indeed, in the 1980s, Rex Nettleford considered Bahamian theatre to be among the best in the Caribbean. Despite this, and unlike Junkanoo, Bahamian theatre has never received any substantial government support. The primary locus for the production of original Bahamian theatre was the Dundas Centre for the Performing Arts in Nassau, a private not-for-profit consortium which from 1981-1998 funded a Repertory Season. This was closely followed by the Regency Theatre in Freeport, which presents the works of a variety of theatre groups.

The theatrical tradition in The Bahamas is as broad as it is lofty. Traditional theatre forms include:

4.1.1.9.1 Church/sacred performances

4.1.1.9.1.1 cantatas

These take place generally on high holidays such as Christmas and Easter, and may dramatize the Biblical events, provide inspirational stories for the faithful, or interpret the faith for congregations. These are normally held in the churches or their halls, and involve singing as well as acting.

4.1.1.9.1.2 programme/concerts

These are traditional community-based theatrical performances, in which the young people of the church or the community are required to demonstrate their performing skills, reciting poetry, singing songs, and putting on small skits. Especially current during the early half of the twentieth century, they overlapped with the growth of institutionalized theatre, and indeed the first acknowledged playwright, Father John Taylor, came out of this tradition. These programmes and concerts survived on the Family Islands for a generation or two after they had become obsolete in Nassau and Freeport, and provided many performers with their first introduction to theatrical performance. However, they may be almost completely obsolete today.

4.1.1.9.1.3 Social satire

The most common theme in Bahamian theatrical performances is that of social satire. The longest running series of performances is James Catalyn's *Laughing at Wese'f*, a biannual production focussed almost exclusively on the foibles and flaws of the society around him.

4.1.1.9.1.4. Skits and sketches

The most common form of theatre in The Bahamas is the skit or the sketch. From primary school to adulthood, Bahamians create and perform skits on innumerable topics, most of them treating current affairs. When several of these are combined to make an evening, they are often performed to packed houses. These sketches are often the vehicles for the satirical commentaries noted above, but equally often they may be used as teaching tools in schools, churches and youth groups to impart positive messages.

4.1.1.9.1.5. Opera, folk opera, and revues

Revues, or shows incorporating music and skits, have always been a staple part of the theatrical offering, but gained national popularity between 1985 and 1995. This began with the production of the *Dis We Tings* trilogy, a series of shows designed to introduce a new generation of Bahamians to forgotten aspects of Bahamian culture. Such productions have high popularity.

The Bahamian musical repertoire ranges from *Our Boys*, the first Grand Opera in the English-speaking Caribbean, *Sammie Swain*, a folk opera created from a Cat Island folktale, and *You Can Lead A Horse To Water*, a Greek-style Bahamian tragedy, to countless revues, satirical sketches, and wry commentaries on local affairs.

4.1.1.9.1.6. Junkanoo

4.1.1.10. Dance

4.1.1.10.1. Junkanoo

4.1.1.10.2. Ring games, jump-in dance, and fire dance

4.1.1.10.3. Round dances

4.1.1.10.3.1. Quadrille

4.1.1.10.3.2. Polka

4.1.1.11. Literature

While Bahamian literature occupies a small section of the Bahamian cultural repertoire, it is nevertheless significant. Bahamian literature incorporates a range of genres, listed below in order of proliferation.

4.1.1.11.1. Non-fiction

Most important of the Bahamian non-fiction expressions are journalism, newspaper editorials, and historical texts.

4.1.1.11.2. Poetry

Bahamian poets cover the spectrum of poetic expression, from formal literate poetry to spoken word performances. Once again, this is closely linked with the oral tradition.

4.1.1.11.3. Drama

Bahamian drama not only competes with poetry as being the strongest literary genre in the Bahamas, but it is also one of the most significant in the Caribbean.

4.1.1.11.4. Short fiction and novels

Unlike its neighbours in the Caribbean, the Bahamas has only a nascent tradition in literary fiction. A few writers have taken on the challenge of writing short stories, and in the past ten years others have produced literary novels of note. This is an area that is wide open for development, especially given the fact that of global literary output, it is the novel that makes its greatest mark.

4.1.1.12. Visual Arts

4.1.1.13. Fashion

4.1.1.13.1. Fabric arts

4.1.1.13.1.1. Androsia

4.1.1.13.1.2. Bahama Handprints

4.1.1.13.2. Body art

4.1.1.13.2.1. Hair design

4.1.1.13.2.2. Nail design

4.1.1.13.3. Clothing styles

4.1.1.14. *Regattas, Homecomings, Festivals*

4.1.1.15. *Cooperative traditions (nautical)*

As a seafaring nation, The Bahamas has developed a number of strong cooperative units created for and honed by the sea. These operate by consensus and largely without obvious external regulation.

4.1.1.15.1. BASRA

4.1.1.15.2. Mailboats

4.1.1.15.3. Ferries

4.1.1.16. *Expatriates in Bahamas*

4.1.1.17. *Expatriate Bahamians*

4.1.2. Economic

The economic strengths of The Bahamas are considerable. These include:

4.1.2.1. *Strong domestic economy*

The Bahamas has the third highest per capita GDP in the Western Hemisphere. It is considered so wealthy that it often does not qualify for international aid and development funding, including cultural resources.

However, very little of the GDP of The Bahamian economy is directed into the cultural sector (see Appendix II), which has resulted in a retardation of the development of that sector, making it one of the least developed cultural sectors in the Western Hemisphere.

It is well established internationally that the cultural sector generates considerable economic wealth, both directly and indirectly.

Action point

- A redirection of resources and funds to the development and promotion of the Bahamian cultural sector is imperative and urgent.

4.1.2.2. High-consumption economy

The Bahamas not only has a per capita GDP, but its economy is also driven predominantly by consumption rather than production. Individual consumers already spend considerable amounts on non-domestic cultural products and activities, from movies and television programming to music to live entertainment both at home and abroad. Individual consumers, therefore, have high disposable incomes that could be directed towards Bahamian cultural activities. At the moment, however, local spending on cultural activities, with the possible exception of Junkanoo, is limited.

Action point

- Consideration must be given within government to the minimization of administrative, regulatory and financial barriers to cultural activities. Priority should be placed on the creation of cultural products that appeal to the Bahamian consumer and the re-education of the Bahamian consumer towards domestic spending.

4.1.2.3. Tourism

In addition to high local consumption patterns, The Bahamas receives in excess of 5 million tourists per year. This represents a huge potential market for authentic Bahamian cultural activities and products. Further, research conducted by the Ministry of Tourism reveals a high demand for such activities and products.

Currently, tourism entrepreneurs have an outdated and naïve view of the demand for cultural products, and provide a high quantity of mass-produced goods, often imported from abroad. In this they misjudge the tourist market. In the global touristic world, even mass tourists have a clear sense of and desire for authenticity and imaginative cultural products. Uniqueness and specificity have high value in the global environment, and Bahamian entrepreneurs have been slow to capitalize on this fact. Rather than producing handmade, quality goods that are unique to The Bahamas, the tendency currently is to buy cheap generic products that could be found anywhere in the region or in the world.

Action points

- Create working links between the cultural administrators and tourism, and remove bureaucratic barriers to collaboration

- Encourage creative partnerships with stakeholders in the tourist industry
- Re-establish collaborative partnerships between vendors and local cultural practitioners and craftsmen
- Engage in a process of local branding and marketing
- Provide a programme of cultural enrichment for local manufacturers and vendors

4.1.2.4 Rich individuals

Owing to The Bahamas' status as a tax haven, there are many wealthy expatriates resident in The Bahamas. However, the Bahamas has only capitalized to a limited degree on this advantage. In the US, for example, low taxation is complemented by a high proportion of private giving to culture, The Bahamas has yet to foster such an environment. The image of The Bahamas as a culture-free zone currently discourages such giving. Further, the disproportionate focus of the Bahamian society in general on Junkanoo does not allow Bahamians to capitalize on this resource. The very uniqueness of Junkanoo makes it hard for foreign residents to relate to. While not wishing to return to a time when high culture was the domain of the expatriates, nevertheless the familiarity of high cultural forms presents many opportunities for encouraging a culture of private donation to the arts.

Action point

- Consider establishing partnerships with the Lyford Cay Foundation
- Offer incentives to encourage patronage of the arts
- Promote the investment opportunities offered by Bahamian cultural development

4.1.2.5 Rich foreign companies

By definition, foreign companies operate also in foreign markets where there is a much greater expectation of cultural donation and corporate social responsibility. By international standards, companies operating in The Bahamas give an extremely small proportion of their budgets to culture. Paradoxically, the foreign-trained heads of these companies are much more au fait with corporate donations to culture than the Bahamian cultural entrepreneurs and artists. Therefore there is a large untapped resource of money and expertise which could in principle provide a rapid step change in funding for the arts in The Bahamas.

Action points

- Encourage linkages between cultural practitioners and the international business community. In this regard, the recent establishment of Bahamian Arts and Business (BAB) is to be noted.

4.1.3. Geographical

4.1.3.1. Cultural diversity

4.1.3.1.1. Locals

- 4.1.3.1.1.1. Various islands and settlements

4.1.3.1.2. Neighbours

- 4.1.3.1.2.1. USA
- 4.1.3.1.2.2. Haiti
- 4.1.3.1.2.3. Cuba
- 4.1.3.1.2.4. West Indies

4.1.3.1.3. Visitors

- 4.1.3.1.3.1. Tourists
- 4.1.3.1.3.2. Temporary residents
 - 4.1.3.1.3.2.1. *Recreational*
 - 4.1.3.1.3.2.2. *Employed*

4.1.3.2. Archipelago

4.1.3.2.1. Proximity to largest economy in the world

Historically, economic status of The Bahamas has been linked inextricably to that of the USA, with the Bahamas often benefiting from American misfortunes. Currently, the challenges posed by globalization and the ubiquity and commercialization of American culture have tended to be emulated by Bahamian cultural entrepreneurs who fail to recognize that exoticism is a valuable commodity. Beyond that, the historic connection between the southern USA and The Bahamas have made the Bahamian islands a

long-standing source of interest for Americans, and particularly for African-Americans in search of their heritage.

4.1.3.2.2. Proximity to regional cultural giants

Bahamian culture is influenced strongly by the neighbouring cultures of Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica, despite deep-seated resistance. Rather than suppressing these influences, Bahamian culture can only benefit embracing the existing linkages. Moreover, The Bahamas is fortuitously placed as a neutral/friendly territory, thus opening up opportunities to serve as interpreters and conduits for these cultures and the American audience.

4.1.3.2.2.1. Cuba

4.1.3.2.2.2. Haiti

4.1.3.2.2.3. Jamaica

4.1.3.3. Attractive environment

The Bahamas is ideally placed and naturally blessed with good weather, stunning scenery ready hospitality, and a reasonable infrastructure. It is well situated for the development of artists' colonies throughout the islands. By developing such communities, The Bahamas will present itself as a destination for more than the super-wealthy, as well as providing economic opportunities, international contacts and global exposure for Bahamian artists. The creation of such colonies would be extremely cost-effective, because the remoteness and beauty of the Family Islands in particular are themselves the fundamental attraction.

Currently, a high number of high-profile and richly talented artists spend time on a regular basis in The Bahamas. These individuals are concentrated in a few key points: Harbour Island, Atlantis, Compass Point and Lyford Cay, where their anonymity is valued and protected. The development of artists' colonies would expand that pool, but more importantly could provide for a better integration of cultural practitioners into the Bahamian society, thus enriching it and themselves. A strong model might be found in the Gulf Islands of the North-West Pacific Coast of the USA and Canada.

One advantage to the development of such colonies is that residents of this type often invest their own money into the development and restoration of local heritage, as has already happened in Harbour Island and as has begun happening in North Eleuthera and Exuma.

Action point

- Develop artists' colonies
- Develop legislation allowing for the ease of movement of artists in and out of The Bahamas to facilitate their ability to work in such colonies
- Review current immigration and customs policies with a view to easing the movement of cultural practitioners

4.1.4. Socio-political

4.1.4.1. Democracy

4.1.4.2. Stability of government

4.1.4.3. Rule of law

4.1.4.4. Tolerance

Despite rhetorical stances that advocate gross intolerance, The Bahamas is in practice an open society, able and to a large extent willing to accommodate all manner of people without demanding total assimilation while retaining its own fundamental cultural values.

Culturally, this is a great strength, and should be capitalized upon.

4.1.4.5. Strong social structures

Bahamian society depends upon the working of a number of strong social structures, such as religion and church communities, civic groups and organizations, Junkanoo shacks, community organizations, and the family. As mentioned above, the nautical traditions of the Bahamian economy help reinforce these structures.

4.1.5. Infrastructural

Particularly in the Northern Bahamas, communications and municipal infrastructures are well-developed and integrated into the global environment.

4.2. Weaknesses

4.2.1. Cultural

4.2.1.1. Lack of self-confidence

Bahamians have very strong views about the Bahamianness of every aspect of life and culture. However, the certainty around specific instances vanishes when questions of national culture are raised. Further, despite these views, Bahamians have not effectively transmitted fundamental cultural traditions to younger generations, thus contributing to a sense of national unease and sometimes crisis about an apparent lack of identifiable culture.

4.2.1.2. *Aliteracy*

4.2.1.3. *Poor cultural infrastructure*

Cultural activity is stymied by the general lack of cultural infrastructure in the form of specialist schools and training facilities, performance spaces, galleries, libraries, bookstores, recording studios, and workshops throughout The Bahamas. Though New Providence and Grand Bahama may have some of this infrastructure, the Family Islands are virtually bereft.

Possible reasons for the lack of development of such facilities include a focus on populist forms of expression and a categorization of all formal training as elitist; aliteracy, which has effectively stopped the development of a national library system; ghettoization of various art forms; a general shortage of available funding for the arts, resulting in competition among art forms rather than cooperation; and a definition of Bahamian culture that privileges certain forms of expression over others.

4.2.1.4. *Lack of research*

The fundamental aliteracy of Bahamian society has also resulted in a lack of value being placed on research and critical analysis. The result of this state of affairs is that traditional cultural forms are disappearing without record. Further, the lack of research feeds into the overall poor self-conception of the average Bahamian.

4.2.1.5. *Lack of training*

In part owing to the emphasis on populist forms of activity, the arts are generally seen to be spontaneous outpourings of creativity rather than crafts and skills that must be honed and developed. This romantic fallacy has led to an explosion of mediocrity in the arts, and has seriously impaired The Bahamas' ability to compete in a global environment.

4.2.1.6. *Shallow historical sense*

Aliteracy may be blamed.

4.2.1.7. *Fragmented organizational structure*

The administration of culture in The Bahamas is spread among agencies too numerous to itemize here (see Appendix II). Duplication of efforts is rife, as well as large gaps in administration.

Even the first steps towards a rationalization of this situation will bear considerable fruit.

4.2.1.8. *Inadequate administrative structure*

The primary administrative organ of culture is the Cultural Affairs Division, which has no permanent status or home. In its 34-year history, it has been associated with the Ministries of Education, Youth and Sports, Local Government, Public Service, Immigration, and Labour, but has never been given either stability or permanence. Its status as a Division means that it reports to the Permanent Secretary of whatever Ministry it finds itself in, and not to the Director. Moreover, the Division has no specific working budget, but rather operates from line items within a larger budget. These facts make the administration of culture difficult (see Report of Cultural Affairs Division, 2005).

4.2.1.9. *Problematic status of high culture*

4.2.1.10. *Stereotypical definition of low culture*

4.2.1.11. *Expatriates in Bahamas*

4.2.1.12. *Expatriate Bahamians*

4.2.2. Economic

4.2.2.1. *Lack of investment/spending in domestic cultural product*

4.2.2.2. *Touristic monoculture*

4.2.2.3. *Materialism*

4.2.3. Geographical

4.2.3.1. *Proximity to USA*

4.2.3.2. Proximity to strong Caribbean cultures

4.2.3.3. Geographical fragmentation

4.2.3.3.1. Difficulty of communication

4.2.3.3.2. Expense of travel

4.2.3.4. Poor IT infrastructure

4.2.4. Socio-political

4.2.4.1. Over-politicization of society

4.2.4.2. Religious conservatism

4.2.4.3. Administrative inflexibility

4.2.4.4. Postcolonial inferiority

4.2.4.5. Internalized racism

4.3. Opportunities

4.3.1. Potential Quick Wins

4.3.1.1. Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism may take many forms. At one end is the creation of craft items and native performances for touristic consumption. At the other end are the investment in heritage tourism, the development of historic and cultural sites of interest. In every case, the investment in cultural tourism is a quick source of generating income that can go directly into the pockets of ordinary Bahamians, and a means of moving away from the current trickle-down economic system.

4.3.1.1.1. Integration of performance into attractions

4.3.1.1.2. Utilization of Nassau as performance space

4.3.1.1.3. Creation of heritage parks

4.3.1.1.4. Extension of touristic map inland

4.3.1.2. Development of national theatre

Bahamians are theatrical people. In an oral society, performance is the main mode of communication. It is no accident that the most developed forms of Bahamian literature are theatre and poetry, both genres that lend themselves to performance. It is also no accident that Junkanoo is a collective expression of public performance. However, the institutionalization of the Bahamian theatrical tradition has been slow. There is no national theatre building, nor is there a national theatre movement or company. Investment in and capitalization on this tradition will bear fruit quickly.

4.3.1.2.1. Creation of theatre industry

4.3.1.2.2. Creation of theatre jobs and employment

4.3.1.2.3. Enhancement of cultural life

4.3.1.2.4. Development of Bahamian writers and production community

4.3.1.2.5. Extension of tourist product

4.3.1.2.6. Expansion of local television and cable programming

4.3.1.2.7. Development of festival culture

4.3.1.3. *Sophistication of Junkanoo*

While the competition of Junkanoo is fairly highly developed, many non-Junkanoo cultural practitioners are critical of that development, and fear that it may be too open to influences that threaten its cultural integrity. Beyond that, while the Junkanoo community engages in its own critical evaluation, this discussion is carried out largely in private, and neither affects nor educates the general public. As the majority of the judges of the competition are drawn from the non-Junkanoo public, this lack of education and exposure is fed back into the parade, as the activities of the judges are largely conservative judging practice

4.3.1.3.1. Development of critical evaluation

4.3.1.3.2. Development of Junkanoo studies

4.3.1.3.3. Institutionalization of Junkanoo administration

4.3.1.3.4. Creation of Junkanoo businesses

4.3.1.4. *Musical training*

Bahamians are naturally musical people, and The Bahamas boasts a musical tradition and influence that is remarkable for its small size. Over the generations, Bahamian music has developed a strong choral

and vocal tradition, which is sustained by the church, and an almost equally strong tradition of brass playing, particularly in Nassau. This is sustained by the churches, civic groups, and the military bands.

Thanks to sustained investment by government over the past ten years, this vocal tradition has been supplemented by the National Arts Festival, the National Youth Choir, and the National Children's Choir.

In recent times, however, while vocal performances have been sustained, the numbers of people trained to play brass instruments have declined, owing to the decline of influence of the Boys' Brigade and church marching bands and possibly the redeployment of police band members in other security activities.

In the last three years, however, the numbers of young people playing brass instruments has increased owing to the urban renewal programme. This, together with the explosion of brass in Junkanoo and the rejuvenation of church marching bands, has produced a new generation of brass players.

However, opportunities for the young musicians are limited by the lack of formal training programmes and exposure. As a result, the overall quality of brass playing is compromised.

Traditionally, Bahamians were also masters of piano, guitar, banjo, accordian, set drums, and conga drums, as well as the traditional goombay drum. Bahamians have never created a strong orchestral string tradition.

Currently, the numbers of guitar, piano, banjo, and accordian players, as well as versatile drummers, is on the decline. Very few Bahamians remain who can play the traditional Spence-style guitar and folk banjo.

This is in large part the effect of massive social changes that have made home-based entertainment technology ubiquitous, and a weakening of extended family structures. As a result, the musical traditions are no longer being passed down within the family unit.

While these social changes are commonly discussed, the specific influence on the immediate future of Bahamian music has not been analyzed, much less addressed.

Action point

- Establishment of after-school music programmes on a national scale
- Extension of in-school music programmes on a national scale
- Scholarships and grants for musical training on a national scale
- Reinforcement and protection of Police and Defence Force Bands
- Creation of Military Cadet Bands
- Creation of a nation-wide programme of musical exposure involving national and professional groups
- Establishment of conservatory
- Establishment of heritage institute
- Establishment of a national musical curriculum

4.3.1.5. *Musical production*

Throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, indigenous musical forms are being disseminated to the global community through audio-visual media.

In The Bahamas, musical production is limited to live performances, and low-budget home recordings and videos.

As a result, Bahamian musical forms are unable to be marketed globally, because the quality of the product does not meet international standards.

Action point

- Emphasis needs to be placed on supporting and training musicians, producers, writers, arrangers, engineers, videographers and editors. Consideration should be given to providing government loan scholarships for this training. Local educational institutions should also be encouraged to develop courses in these areas. Grants to assist with the support of this production should be made available to the public.

4.3.1.6. *Administrative rationalization*

- 4.3.1.6.1. Creation of Department of Culture
- 4.3.1.6.2. Institutionalization Cultural Commission
- 4.3.1.6.3. Foundation of Arts Council
- 4.3.1.6.4. Rationalization of Heritage management

4.3.2. Development of cultural industries

4.3.2.1. *Intellectual Property Laws*

4.3.3. Economic diversification

4.3.3.1. *Culture*

4.3.4. National pride

4.3.5. Toleration

4.3.6. Democratic transformation

4.3.7. Harnessing of transient high-profile cultural population

4.4. Threats

4.4.1. More bureaucracy

4.4.2. Yet more committees

4.4.3. Stultification of cultural development

4.4.4. Entrenchment of conservative forces

4.4.5. Over commodification of culture

4.4.6. Further opportunity for procrastination

4.4.7. Promotion of cultural exodus

SECTION II – CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT ENDS AND MEANS

5. *Ends*

5.1. Institutional

One of the main recommendations of this document is that attention should be paid to the formation of national institutions. Bahamian culture is rich in part because it has traditionally been practice-based, but in taking a national view, one has to recognize that the time has come for the kinds of reflection and formal development and growth which institutionalization brings.

In rapidly changing societies that are as open to global influences as the modern Bahamas, traditional structures of enculturation and practical training are overwhelmed. The disintegration of the extended family unit, the suburbanization of the general populace, and the increased gravitation towards age-specific groupings among the young all contribute to a loss of the traditional methods of passing on Bahamian cultural skills and knowledge, resulting in the stagnation of cultural forms. This can be seen in many Bahamian cultural activities from Junkanoo to straw work. In such situations, formal institutions become the guardians of cultural continuity. These are not mausoleums, but living hothouses of cultural activity.

We propose action now to establish the following institutions. We welcome feedback on:

5.1.1. how limited resources should be prioritized among them

5.1.2. relations between training schools and institutions

5.1.2.1. Connection between existing national entities and the institutions

5.1.2.1.1. Do the existing cultural entities meet the needs of the country?

5.1.2.1.2. Should the national entities be specifically linked with the institutions?

5.1.2.1.3. Is there a need for the establishment of other national cultural entities?

5.1.2.2. Training schools

5.1.2.2.1. Dormitories

5.1.2.2.2. Funding

5.1.2.3. Questions

5.1.2.3.1. At what level should these institutions be established?

5.1.2.3.1.1. Primary

5.1.2.3.1.2. Secondary

5.1.2.3.1.3. Tertiary

5.1.2.3.2. Should these institutions include their own general curricula, thus allowing school-age students to attend full-time?

5.1.2.3.3. Should these institutions be primarily afterschool institutions until the tertiary level?

5.1.2.3.4. How much cultural content and training should be incorporated into the regular school curricula?

5.1.2.4. Proposed areas of focus

5.1.2.4.1. Music

5.1.2.4.2. Theatre

5.1.2.4.3. Dance

5.1.2.4.4. Visual Arts

5.1.2.4.5. Junkanoo

5.1.2.5. Apprenticeships

5.1.2.6. National entities

5.1.2.6.1. National Orchestra

5.1.2.6.2. National Choirs

5.1.2.6.3. National Dance Companies

5.1.2.6.4. National Theatre Company

5.1.2.6.5. National Theatre Building

5.1.2.6.6. National Concert Hall

5.1.2.6.7. National Library

5.2. Administrative

See Appendix II.

5.2.1. Rationalization of current situation

5.2.2. Depoliticization of sector

5.2.3. Proposed Statutory Bodies

5.2.3.1. Cultural Commission/Arts Council

5.2.3.2. Junkanoo Commission/Authority

5.2.3.3. Other

5.3. National Goals

5.3.1. Culturally literate society

5.3.2. Strong national identity

5.3.3. Increased economic power of cultural sector

5.3.4. Employment

5.3.5. Investment

6. Means

- 6.1. Ratification of cultural policy document**
- 6.2. Passing of relevant legislation**
 - 6.2.1. Arts Council Bill**
 - 6.2.2. Junkanoo Commission Bill**
 - 6.2.3. Other**
- 6.3. Increased participation of private and corporate entities**
 - 6.3.1. Arts and business cooperation**
 - 6.3.2. Development of corporate giving**
 - 6.3.3. Development of private patron communities**
 - 6.3.4. Tax policy**
 - 6.3.5. Foreign investment planning requirements**
- 6.4. Promote national debate/consultation**
- 6.5. Enfranchisement of existing practitioners**
- 6.6. Business training (existing at COB but artists need specific exposure)**
 - 6.6.1. IT**
 - 6.6.2. Bookkeeping**
 - 6.6.3. Marketing**
 - 6.6.4. General business**
- 6.7. Inter-sector skills exchange**
 - 6.7.1. Cooperation and lobbying skills (Junkanoo)**
 - 6.7.2. Grassroots engagement (Junkanoo)**

6.7.3. Corporate engagement & project management (Visual artists)

6.7.4. International exposure (Visual artists)

6.7.5. Commercial success (Visual artists)

6.7.6. Production and presentation skills (Theatre)

6.7.7. International status (Theatre, music)

7. Timeline

8. Budget

9. Partners

9.1. Governmental

9.1.1. Tourism

9.1.2. Trade and Industry

9.1.3. Education

9.1.4. Health

9.1.4.1. Environmental Health

9.1.4.2. Health

- 9.1.5. Finance**
- 9.1.6. Works**
- 9.1.7. BEC**
- 9.1.8. ZNS**
- 9.1.9. Foreign Affairs**
- 9.1.10. National Security**
- 9.1.11. Urban Renewal**
- 9.1.12. Clifton Authority**
- 9.1.13. Antiquities and Monuments**
- 9.2. QANGOs (Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organizations)**
 - 9.2.1. Bahamas Development Board**
 - 9.2.2. Bay Street Redevelopment**
- 9.3. Private Sector**

10. Domestic

10.1. *Communications*

- 10.1.1. Cable Bahamas**
- 10.1.2. Nassau Guardian**
- 10.1.3. Tribune Consortium**
- 10.1.4. Dupuch Publications**
- 10.1.5. Jones Communications**
- 10.1.6. More FM**
- 10.1.7. Island FM**
- 10.1.8. Other communications groups**

10.2. *Tourism*

- 10.2.1. Atlantis
- 10.2.2. Bahamar
- 10.2.3. Four Seasons
- 10.2.4. Our Lucaya
- 10.2.5. Other Resort Consortiums

10.3. *Business & Finance*

- 10.3.1. Insurance Companies
- 10.3.2. Trust Companies
- 10.3.3. Banks
- 10.3.4. Bahamian Arts and Business
- 10.3.5. National Endowment for the Arts

10.4. *International*

10.4.1. *Regional*

10.4.1.1. CARICOM

10.4.1.2. OAS

10.4.1.3. IDB

10.4.2. *International*

10.4.2.1. UNESCO

10.4.2.2. Smithsonian

10.4.2.3. Commonwealth

10.4.2.4. British Council

10.4.2.5. NESTA

10.4.2.6. other

11. *Conclusion*

Appendices

I. Historical review

Geographically and historically, the Bahamas may be considered one of the former British West Indian colonies. However, certain distinctions must be drawn, among them the proximity of the territory to the North American mainland, the unique geography of the country, and the corresponding economic foundation that resulted, all of which render the Bahamas a notably different creature.

Unlike the major Caribbean possessions of Britain, the Bahama Islands were not held for their economic potential — the colony was never a producer of sugar — but for their strategic position on the borders of Britain's enemies in the region, represented by Cuba, Haiti and Florida. As a result, the white population was not made up of fortune-seekers and planters, but was rather a motley crew of opportunists and non-conformists who sought in the Bahamas a measure of personal autonomy. They found it in their relation to the sea; piracy, privateering, wrecking, stevedoring, blockade running, sponging, trade and smuggling of every kind have sustained Bahamians throughout the centuries.

The earliest English-speaking settlers were Bermudian religious dissidents who in 1648 established the independent republic of Eleutheria in the Bahama Islands (see Craton and Saunders, 1992: 104-114). Although the aspiration was utopian, the actual fortunes of the republic were poor; it began with shipwreck, was followed by a generation of painful wresting of subsistence goods from the soil, and was sustained by the trade of hardwoods and ambergris (whale sperm), not with Britain, or even Bermuda, but with the American colonies. By the time of the republic's collapse — within twenty years of its establishment — the Eleutherians and their descendants had learned the hard way the fundamental Bahamian lesson: that survival depends not on the land but on the sea. The ensuing centuries saw Bahamians engaged in various maritime activities, not least among them piracy, privateering and wrecking.

Most scholars of Caribbean society and history regard the plantation — or at the very least, the social structure resulting from it — as central to their understanding. For them, the plantation has created societies which are reliant on one or two cash crops produced by forced or indentured labour, and constituted of complex and rigid hierarchies. Hannerz, writing of the Cayman Islands, makes a case for an alternative model, arguing that the existence of certain small islands on which extensive cultivation could not take place requires a different approach:

Here, however, we will be concerned with another Caribbean. It has intimate links to Plantation America and shares much of its traditions, but it has no large plantations and is oriented instead toward the sea. Scattered islands in the eastern Caribbean may be considered representative of it, and in the past the Bahamas and Bermuda further north shared several of its characteristics ... it may be seen in a historical network of English-speaking societies ... with economies which have involved piracy, wrecking, fishing, turtling, seamanship, logcutting, smuggling and small-scale agriculture in mixes which have varied over time and between different territories. (1974: 20)

Such was certainly the situation in the Bahamas during the early period of settlement, and the resulting social structure reflects this fluidity of the Bahamian economy. It is arguable, for instance, that slaves in the Bahamas before the 1780s possessed a measure of autonomy that slaves in the plantation Americas did not. First, the economy, based on commerce and seafaring, allowed for a cadre of skilled slaves whose activities permitted a high level of personal responsibility. Several of these were able to buy their freedom, as the existence of New Guinea (the Creek Village), a settlement of Free Coloured people, suggested (Craton and Saunders, 1992: 118).¹ Second, the history of piracy allowed for the blurring of such distinctions as slave and master, as blacks and whites alike were pirates. Craton and Saunders observe that

[t]he class divisions of the 'straight' world were consciously rejected [by the pirates], and racial divisions were also often ignored as being irrelevant ... suitable blacks and browns were often recruited along with the white crewmen of captured vessels ... Bahamian pirate crews were thus to an extent multicomplexioned and polyglot. (1992: 111)

Third, the difficulty in making a living from the sea meant that white Bahamians were precluded from owning many slaves or even from curtailing too much the activities of the ones they owned. One might argue there was a certain pragmatic value in allowing slaves to buy their freedom rather than having to support them in their less productive years. Consequently, black Bahamians did appear better off than their counterparts in the rest of the New World. (Craton and Saunders, 1992: 173).

This state of affairs was changed somewhat by the arrival of Loyalist refugees from the Thirteen Colonies who, retaining allegiance to the British Crown, were forced to leave the United States after the success of the American Revolution. These came with their slaves to establish cotton plantations throughout the central and southern islands, and represent the first group of settlers with any extensive agricultural interest. Their presence transformed the colony socially,

¹Ironically, this village no longer survives.

intellectually and politically. Many came from cities such as Charleston and Williamsburg in the Carolinas and regarded themselves as the superiors of the original white inhabitants of the colony, whom they considered the illiterate offspring of pirates (Albury, 1975). This group established schools and churches, rebuilt the capital, and injected the spirit of the Enlightenment into the community. Others, planters and farmers, brought with them the mindset of the plantation, and for a while enforced the social order with which they had been familiar in the American colonies. Parliament after their arrival concerned itself with the enacting of laws governing the owning and administering of slaves. Yet even they were unable to sustain an undiluted reliance on the land for long. Cotton flourished in the Bahamas during the first ten years of its cultivation, but by the early 1800s pestilence, exhausted soils and bad weather had taken their toll. Plantations were abandoned, often along with the slaves, or else planters diversified their crops, turning to the sea more and more to supplement their living. As a result, the end of slavery in 1838 had less of an impact on the economic and social structure of the Bahamas than it had on many other Caribbean colonies. Because Bahamian slaves had long been permitted — or required — to diversify their activities, the planters had no need for massive importations of indentured labour; moreover, the colony, already fairly poor, did not suffer a drastic change in financial fortunes. The Bahamian plantocracy did not, as was the tendency on the sugar islands, withdraw *en masse* to the metropolis (which was, in any case, quite unlikely to be in Europe, as most of them had come originally from the Thirteen Colonies of the Americas); rather, it remained in the Bahamas, withdrawing perhaps to the capital, transferred its agricultural interests to sea-based commerce, as the Eleutherians had before it, and wielded power in that fashion.

One legacy of the white presence in the colony is found in its politics. For most of the history of European settlement in the Bahamas, the archipelago has enjoyed representative parliamentary government, established in 1729 and continuing unbroken until today. This fact makes it one of the two British possessions in the Caribbean/Atlantic region to have had uninterrupted self-government for more than forty years; the majority of British colonies in the region were, for the last century of British rule, administered as Crown Colonies. The primary reason for the continued existence of representative government in the Bahamas was the significant white population — an estimated 15% of the total. By the twentieth century, therefore, indigenous whites, and not the more disinterested British, held the primary responsibility for the social and economic affairs of the nation.

This state of affairs, ironically, provided the mass of the Bahamian people with fewer privileges than their counterparts in the West Indian Crown Colonies. While the removal of representative government in Jamaica at the end of the

nineteenth century has been viewed as a setback by Jamaicans (see, for instance, Nettleford, 1970), the fact that such government in the Bahamas was controlled by a white minority meant that avenues of advancement opened to inhabitants of other British Caribbean colonies by the British themselves — education and the civil service — were not available to the vast majority of non-white Bahamians; in most cases, there were enough white Bahamians to fill such places. What occurred in the Bahamian situation, then, was the establishment of a society in which individual enterprise, coupled with skin colour and ancestry, mattered more than education. The oppression of the Bahamian masses by the mercantile elite was considerable (Johnson, 1991a). Although the colony was, like the other American colonies, integrated into the global cash economy throughout most of its history, many ordinary Bahamians, particularly those living in the outlying islands of the archipelago, were excluded from participation in that economy. These people relied on subsistence farming or depended on the mercantile elite for employment. Such was the monopoly of the white bourgeoisie in the capital that most of these labourers, when hired, were not paid in cash. Rather, they worked according to the ‘truck system’, being compensated for their services in goods supplied to them by their employers (Johnson, 1991b).

Other areas provided some benefits. On the one hand, the ownership of land, unusually widespread in the archipelago, provided one source of Bahamians’ personal power and self-identification. Generally a customary tenure with little or no standing in the courts, but with considerable *de facto* value, this property provided many Bahamians not only with the ability to engage in subsistence agriculture free from rents and taxes, but also with a collective identity upon which to draw. On the other hand, the intensifying depression of the turn of the twentieth century ironically increased the autonomy of many black Bahamians. In the late 1800s the expansion of the States into the Pacific west coast, together with the acquisition of the Hawaiian islands, had resulted in protective tariffs being levied against foreign imports. The Bahamian export industry, hitherto relying primarily upon the sale of tomatoes and pineapples to the USA, thus effectively lost its major market.² The depression that followed forced many men, most of them black, to emigrate in search of employment. Their gradual integration into the global cash economy, and their remittances of their wages to their families at home, meant that many of their relatives were no longer wholly dependent on the credit extended to them by whites. Beginning in the 1920s, moreover, the tourism and construction industries further freed many from their servitude to the ‘truck’ system. Finally, for those people who were able to build their own boats and man them themselves — thus avoiding the maritime

²Bahamian exporters traded with the United States of America, the proximity of that country providing much surer returns than trade with Great Britain.

monopoly of the capital — the ever-present fortunes of the sea provided their own rewards.

Despite their growing economic autonomy during the early twentieth century, the political influence of the black and coloured population was limited; black Bahamians, although a majority since 1783, held no real political power until 1967. Not only was the Bahamas deprived of the educational and economic advantages available to middle-class blacks in British crown colonies,³ but the presence of a sizeable group of native whites also hindered the establishment of a significant middle class. Plantation Caribbean society is understood as being constructed in layers which marry class with race and colour. At the apex were a number of people of European descent, often expatriates who governed the country. At the base were a large mass of working people — peasants, *lumpenproletariat* or both — who tended to be of predominantly African or Amerindian descent. In between was a buffer class consisting variously of people of mixed heritage, who were favoured over their black brethren for positions of minor influence in the society, and other groups of immigrants, such as Orientals, East Indians, people from the southern Mediterranean, and southern Europeans (Portuguese and Greeks).⁴ Although *social* categories were recognised in the Bahamas that mirrored the wider Caribbean model, in *political* terms racial discrimination took place along lines more common in the USA. In other words, any admixture of African blood qualified one as 'coloured' and guaranteed one a subordinate position in society. This discrimination was intensified during the early twentieth century with the development of tourism and the frequenting of American visitors to the Bahamas.

Until the 1960s, then, the question of a *national* consciousness was not raised in the Bahamas. Until that time the country was governed by a white minority who regarded itself as an offshoot of Great Britain, and who identified — along with many non-white Bahamians — more or less wholly with 'Mother England'.⁵

³The first Government High School was opened in 1925; the first piece of labour legislation was enacted in 1942 (Craton and Saunders, 1998: 291); the secret ballot was not enacted throughout the Bahamas until 1944 (1998: 307); women were not accorded the vote until 1960; and the concept of one man, one vote was not instituted until 1964 (1998: 337).

⁴See Hughes, 1981, for a treatment of this theme, and Saunders, 1990c, for a discussion of the role of mixed-race Bahamians within the wider American-style frame. See too M. G. Smith, 1965, on Jamaica, Martinez-Alier, 1974, on Cuba, C.L.R. James, 1963, on Haiti, and R.T. Smith, 1956, on British Guiana.

⁵This identification was reinforced during the Second World War by the appointment of the Duke of Windsor as Royal Governor. His exile, one could

Unlike other British West Indian possessions, independence from Britain was not actively sought; independence would bring no benefits for the governing elites, who had had self-governance for well over three hundred years. The struggle that arose during the mid-twentieth century in the Bahamas was a civil one. Black Bahamians, long in the majority but denied full participation in the affairs of the state, sought first and foremost majority rule. In other words, Bahamians themselves were divided in an interracial conflict; black Bahamians of all but the very lightest hues tended to unite in a bid to overthrow the white hegemony, while white Bahamians responded by closing ranks to prevent that overthrow. As the growing tide of nationalist movements swelled throughout the colonial world, the Bahamian gaze was focused internally, at the structures of power within the state. During the 1950s and 1960s, the movement that would ultimately lead to the independence of the Bahamian nation modelled itself far more on the Civil Rights Movement in the USA than on the anti-colonial battles elsewhere in the region. Race, not government, defined the fight.

In 1967, following two and a half decades of growing agitation on the part of the black and coloured majority of the Bahamian population, the white leaders were ousted for the first time and a black Bahamian government, the Progressive Liberal Party, was elected. The coming to power of the PLP has been referred to as many things, among them a 'quiet revolution' and an 'exodus'; but in a colony where a black majority had been ruled by a white minority for longer than memory could tell, the psychic power of the change was profound. Independence was the goal of the new *black* government.

argue, was the confirmation, for inhabitants of the Bahamian colony, of the islands' intimate attachment to England.