

HOW READING CHANGED THE BAHAMAS

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February 20, 2017 @ Stephen Dillet Primary School

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In the late 1920s when Sir Randol Fawkes was a boy, around the age of most of you here at Stephen Dillett Primary, he had great difficulty learning to read and write.

At that time, in the humble household of the Fawkes Family located on Fort Fincastle, there was little money. When Edward Fawkes, Dad's father, a mason,

came home on Friday evenings his weekly wage was basically spent once the bare necessities for the home were purchased.

But regardless of their circumstances education was paramount in the Fawkes' Household.



The Fawkes Family in the early 1940s

With what little money they had, Sir Randol's mother, Mildred Fawkes, hired Donald W. Davis to come to the house and tutor him. Many of you will know D. W. Davis as a pioneer in Bahamian education having implemented Parent/Teachers

Day, Achievement Day, school uniforms and the standardization of government examinations using the Cambridge Junior and Senior Exams platform. He also laid the foundation for the government school system which brought education to those Bahamians who were least able to afford it.



D.W. Davis

For his pioneering spirit and contributions to our country, the D. W. Davis Jr High School was named in his memory.

D. W. Davis' efforts paid off and using the reading and writing skills taught to him, Sir Randol became an attorney. In fact, he was the third black Bahamian attorney to be called to the Bahamas Bar.

Fast forward to the late 1960s when I was a boy.

Sir Randol use to travel a lot during his political and legal career, and on his trips he would make it a point to visit a book store. On his return home, he would bring us books as gifts, not clothing or toys.

Dad, himself, was not given to reading just any book but he read the classics, the great works of literature, biographies of people like Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill and Marcus Garvey. And always and at all times the Bible, especially the book of Proverbs. In fact each Saturday morning before breakfast, the entire family sat together and read one chapter of the book of Proverbs in the Bible.

A singular memory that family members would still have of Sir Randol is that of a figure sitting at a table or a desk reading, studying or writing. While people will talk at length about his contributions to the Labor movement, they don't realize how much of his life was devoted to reading. He had a library in his home and he kept the door to the library locked because he wanted to ensure that none of his books went missing. After Sir Randol died and we were able to unlock the door to his library, we found that there was no space on the floor to walk because books were on the shelves, on top of the shelves, and under the shelves. Books covered every inch of library.

If Sir Randol were here with us today, I know what Dad would tell you to read, read, read and then read some more. For reading is your path to success in life.

You see Sir Randol subscribed to the high principals of justice, equality, morality, law and order and caring for those less fortunate. All of these principals were obtained by reading the great books.

The genesis of Sir Randol's contribution to our country was that spark of reading imparted to him by D. W. Davis.

Young men of the Rising Star Mentorship Program listen and implement the guidance given by your leaders, follow the lead of Travis Robinson and continue to read as much as possible.



Thank you for listening. Go forth Rising Stars and read, read, read and then read some more.