

EQUALITY & RESPECT

A collection of new works
by Antonius Roberts



EQUALITY & RESPECT

A collection of new works

by Antonius Roberts

DEDICATION

The text below was sent to me by an African student at the College of The Bahamas. I have dedicated this exhibition to this unnamed writer. She is the muse that inspired me to create this new body of work which seeks to stand for Equality and Respect for Bahamian womanhood.

.....

“ Who are you after you leave everything you think defines you and must sustain yourself? When no one will watch over your actions as was done before? When it seems like God is not watching you and you are left alone, in a new place, and you must decide who you are before you lose the very foundation of your existence?

I decided that I would wear my blackness with strength and pride. I would love the skin I was in; I would not allow anyone to steal my confidence.

I decided to be the woman whose presence screams confidence, peace with oneself and joy.

When you move to a place where colorism is so strong, you can't afford to be unsure of your blackness or of your heritage.

You must love yourself and share that love with others, by accepting and embracing yourself. ”

- ANONYMOUS

EQUALITY & RESPECT

A collection of new works
by Antonius Roberts

“Equality & Respect” is a continuation of my exploration of Bahamian womanhood. Reproductions of the work are visible prominently as public art installation on the Pink building on Cumberland Street.

The proceeds derived from the sale of one original work have already:

- Helped to send several children impacted by the loss of a father back to school;
- Produced educational banners for the Bahamas Crisis Center;
- Paid for the design and production of a t-shirt to be sold for \$50.00 each with all profits (75% of sales) donated to Bahamas Crisis Center and The AIDS Foundation of The Bahamas.

Limited edition t-shirts, featuring one of the original works, are available for purchase. Your investment in a t-shirt will demonstrate how art can transform lives and contribute to the further development of a civil society.





The following excerpts are taken from the speech of Dr. Doris Johnson on behalf of the Women's Suffrage Movement on January 19, 1959 to the Members of the House of Assembly.

i. EQUAL RIGHTS

We women of The Bahamas have lined up on the side of the United Nations and justice and democracy, and do hereby reaffirm our faith in the equal rights of men and women and are prepared to perpetuate these ideas to our children. In the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it reads 'whereas the peoples of the United Nations in the Charter have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity of and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women, the General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

We quote Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration:

Article 1 - All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 2 - Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth in This Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour or sex.

- DR. DORIS JOHNSON



ii. PAST

We wish to go on record in protesting to the House that a great injustice has been done to the people's cause and that this rash, irresponsible deed, can only be vindicated by a noble act on the part of the Assembly. To be deceived is regarded by women as one of the greatest crimes against their faithful trust, since faithfulness is the basic principle upon which we build our homes, rear our children and build our nation.

We women have accepted and paid all the taxes which are imposed upon us by a government in which we now have no representation. Since we are powerless to limit these taxes, we are forced to bring charges of tyranny and despotism against this our Government if it further denies us our right to choose those who must rule over us and share in the making of our laws.

- DR. DORIS JOHNSON



iii. YOU JOKING...!!

We women press this demand and ask such enactment on the basis of not who is right but what is right, what is right for our country. We judge expediency only on this basis. We seek no compromise. There is no alternative. We abhor any delaying action. We women ask only that you gentlemen move now to secure the rights of 54,000 women including your wives and daughters.

Approximately half of the female population are working women, many of whom are the entire support of their families. Many have built their own homes, have bank accounts, established themselves in business and pay government taxes. An earlier petition points out to the Honourable House that it is a violation of the principles of democracy to grind out taxes to people who are without the power to limit or extend such taxes. Taxation without representation as you will recall was the basic principles upon which the American Revolution was based. It is this principle which still stirs a revolt in the hearts of Bahamian women, and energises us to make our plea before honourable men.

- DR. DORIS JOHNSON



iv. DON'T DO IT!

To add insult to injury, Mr. Boyd - at the same time - recommended the extension of the franchise to all males who have reached the age of 21. May we remind you that there has never been any demand from our husbands and sons to secure their rights, but these are freely recommended. The Women's Suffrage Movement wishes to go on record as wholeheartedly supporting Universal Franchise for men and women alike, and the Secretary of State must be sternly reminded by the women of the Bahamas that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, set forth in the Charter of the U.N., guarantees to all men and women regardless of race, colour, or sex the fundamental right to vote.

- DR. DORIS JOHNSON



The following excerpts are taken from the public education tract entitled "Education for Citizenship: The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women" published by the Bahamian Women's Suffrage Movement, circa 1961.

v. INNOCENCE

If we are to have democracy, each must understand that the control of his behaviour is important because of its effect upon others; therefore we make LAWS which insure that everyone's freedom is protected. Democracy is a force which develops and grows, and when once gained, it must be cherished and protected if we are to hand it down inviolate to our children.

What we must know above all is that democracy can work only when VOTERS keep themselves well-informed, thoughtful, active in their communities, courageous, and honest.

Two essentials of a democracy are: majority rule, and the protection of minority rights. Democracy is a matter of fair, friendly, and cooperative face-to-face relationships, as well as of equal legal rights. Democratic citizenship cannot be passive; it must be a matter of reading, thinking, discussing and working to keep hard won freedoms alive and growing.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship:
The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"



vi. DIGNITY

Having the RIGHT TO VOTE means that the common man is thereby able to share in shaping those policies of government under which he must live. By securing this and other human rights for all our people, we move closer and closer to the ideal of a more democratic government, and the lessening of arbitrary state power.

There is no simple definition for the word DEMOCRACY, but we can think of it as meaning a way of life whereby people are free to think for themselves, to study and ask questions, and to let others know what they are thinking.

Through democracy we come to recognize the dignity and worth of the individual; we believe in the importance of the common man, and his contribution to society. We accept the fact that people are different in many ways, and also that they are similar in a great many more ways.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship:
The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"



vii. WARRIORS

Bahamian men fought in two World Wars to help make the world safe for democracy, and in the Second World War even Bahamian women joined in the service alongside their men. Now it is our turn to fight for democracy at home. This message must go to all the Out Islands.

When the united voice of Bahamian women continues to echo the cry for EQUAL RIGHTS, the walls of bigotry and prejudice against Bahamian womanhood will come tumbling down.

Women's Suffrage is inevitable. It must come, and the present members of our Government know it. How quickly it will come is going to depend on you and me. The idea is already embedded in the minds of most Bahamian women. The idea will not die but rather it grows from day to day. A sensible and wise government will support an idea that it knows it can neither bury nor destroy.

Finally, the Women's Suffrage Movement will continue to be a thorn in the flesh of our government until the VOTE FOR WOMEN becomes a reality. How long will it take? This depends on you and me, Bahamian men and women. You only win a battle when you join the fight. This is your Right...make it your Fight.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship:
The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"



viii. PROUD

Today, Bahamian women, like women the world over, are demanding the rights of FULL CITIZENSHIP in the land of their birth.

There are many duties and responsibilities which make up "full citizenship". The RIGHT TO VOTE is recognized as the most important step towards full citizenship. It is this right that we now seek. It is the most powerful means by which people are able to have the kind of government they want.

The aim of the Women's Suffrage Movement is to ensure that the government of our country benefits from this large, intelligent working force. Once the vote is secured, there are other rights for which we must strive if we are to be equal politically to our sisters in other parts of the Commonwealth of Nations and United Kingdom Dependencies.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship: The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"



ix. PRESENT

The privilege to vote carries with it an important duty - the duty to be informed. In fact, this is one of the most important ways of building a democracy. Become well-informed; know what ought to be known, and give careful thought to what we hear and read.

Changing conditions in our own islands, as well as throughout the world, challenge every Bahamian woman to become better informed. Indeed, every generation has much more to learn than the ones that went before. Freedoms gained by our foreparents must be preserved, cherished, and improved. We owe great appreciation to those who laid a foundation on which we now build, but we can best show this appreciation by continuing the task that they alone could not finish.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship:
The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"



x. FUTURE

The Bahamian woman realizes that if her contribution to a better life is to be improved, then she can no longer be silent on issues that basically affect her life and the life of her family.

The next step for our women is the realization of first class citizenship. The contribution women have made in the past to community improvement is a mere indication of what vast potential they hold for the future.

- EXCERPT FROM "Education for Citizenship:
The Next Step - Votes for Bahamian Women"

This excerpt is from Sylvia Larramore's Letter to the Editor of the Tribune, dated Oct. 26, 1954.



xi. AUTHENTIC

The Bahamian women need to get together and fight for a franchise. We don't have enough fighting women. We need women of iron, women who are neither afraid, nor ashamed to stand up in public and let the Bahamas Government know what they want. Women who will take part in the march of progress.

Women, turn about! Take courage, arise and shine. The Bahamas has a place for you if you are made of the right stuff.

It is my firm conviction that if the Bahamian women were to amalgamate and fight with all their might and let the Government know they mean business, I bet this time the matter will not die in Committee.

- SYLVIA LARRAMORE



D

This excerpt is from Mary Ingraham's radio address printed in the Nassau Guardian dated June 30 - July 1, 1962.

xii. SISTERHOOD

My dear friends,

You are all aware that today you are free women, no longer slaves. Because only slaves cannot vote. Therefore, I do hope that every woman who has reached the age of 21 will register, and remember that no one can tell you whom to vote for.

Remember ladies, we got this vote by fighting together as a band of women. And as God showed all that woman was His first ambassador when he said, "Go tell my disciples that I have arisen", so let us go and do our job.

- MARY INGRAHAM



THANK YOU

I would like to acknowledge the following persons for their invaluable encouragement and support:

Marion Bethel for her generous contribution of compiling all the texts that accompany the artwork.

Dr Sandra Dean-Patterson

Alicia Wallace

Jodi Minnis

Amanda Coulson

Sir Durward Knowles

Captain Eugene Munroe

The Wednesday Lunch Group

The Sign Man

Suntee

Roland Rose

Rhondelle Taylor

Dionne Benjamin-Smith

.....



ANTONIUS ROBERTS
STUDIO & GALLERY

At Hillside House

25 Cumberland Street | P O Box CB 13063 | Nassau, The Bahamas | Tel: [242] 322.7678
antonius.roberts@gmail.com | antonius@coralwave.com | www.antoniusroberts.com