

Winner: College Division

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### Everyone should keep in reserve an alternate plan for livelihood.

The year 2020 was unprecedented in a plethora of ways that have yet to be fully grasped by those who endured it. A highly contagious and deadly virus with a catchy name struck nations around the world, wreaking havoc, and creating chaos in its wake. The Coronavirus that sparked the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the lives of humanity in a multifaceted way. Media and officials call it the new norm, but nothing's normal; no close and casual interactions, everything is distant and formal. Masks are mandated and must always be on, a simple sneeze or cough, now automatically warrants great scorn. Indeed, a sneeze uttered in times past would receive a "bless you", however, a sneeze uttered now, will only cause people to stress you. The cries of the faithful, our Lord how long? How can we do right when it feels like you've left, and everything is going wrong? A universally clear impact of COVID-19 is how feeble job security is and this generates a scare. For this reason, everyone should keep in reserve an alternate plan for livelihood, so that when circumstances like such arise, they'll still be good. One thing this pandemic has brought me is a new perspective, success is still attainable, you just have to broaden your objectives. I aim to encourage you to pursue multiple streams of income and diversify your career aspirations. This is key to increasing your chances of not only surviving but thriving in a compromising circumstance such as is the Coronavirus pandemic.

The only constant in life is change, and as this phenomenon is inevitable, we must always be aware and adaptable. The Bahamas recorded its first case of COVID-19 on a fateful Sunday in March of last year. Since then, the repercussions have been manifold and is especially observable in the job market. This market has suffered a major loss as unemployment skyrocketed due to resultant lockdowns, curfews, and restrictions. Many persons lost jobs they had worked all their adult lives, without any plan B in mind. Out of work, out of ideas, and without any plan of action, persons found themselves at the poverty line and solely dependent on NIB for sustenance. When faced with calamity, we have two options: conform or transform. Romans 12:2 states, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” When faced with these two antagonistic options, choosing to transform rather than conform is a fundamental step in the right direction. Persons who had alternative livelihoods, side hustles, and multiple streams of income are far better off than those who had all their eggs in one basket. Versatility and variety makes individuals more marketable, valuable and viable. This is the case because if they lost one avenue of income, they have others readily available to rely on. The aforementioned makes bearing the burden of a catastrophic pandemic more achievable.

COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability and susceptibility of The Bahamas to financial strain and hardship. Moreover, it has revealed the dire consequence of our over-reliance on tourism as a means of generating the majority of wealth for the country. This pandemic halted flights, closed seaports, and demolished the tourism industries of all affected countries. Our nation was not spared and is still suffering immensely due to the lack of infrastructure to facilitate alternate livelihoods that can generate wealth on a national level. Hopefully, this grim reality check prompts government and civilians alike, to see the prudence and importance of reserving other pathways to productivity through alternative

livelihoods. Long gone are the days where one job was surety enough for a person to solely pursue. With the proliferation and popularity of Artificial Intelligence, rise in the occurrence of natural disasters as well as epidemics, the threat to human sustainability is at an all-time high. Therefore, having backup plans at this time and in this age is ever so crucial.

Competition is peaking as resources are declining, so must one be able to distinguish themselves from another and this can be achieved through diversification. Through diversification, one has access to multiple skills which then yields a myriad of opportunities.

Personally, this pandemic experience has been extremely eye-opening. Watching everything unfold gave me invaluable insight, that prior to COVID-19, I would have never appreciated let alone be privy to. I am graduating this May with a bachelor's degree in Secondary Science Education and a Minor in History from the University of The Bahamas. Before this ordeal, my mind was set on becoming a teacher, rising through the ranks, and eventually settling in the Ministry of Education. While this is indeed a good trajectory, my "2020" vision, has allowed me to recognize the mediocrity in such a plan. My goal should not be so narrowly focused and as a result of this acknowledgment, I have become much more ambitious and passionate about other career initiatives. I am diligently exploring entrepreneurial endeavors with a zeal and enthuse that was inspired by the tragedy that is COVID-19. I have also undertaken alternate livelihoods to support myself and my family. At the start of the pandemic, I had an on-campus job that I did through the week. Once campus closed, I was forced to seek other honest routes of employment and it prompted me to start tutoring, cleaning, and doing odds and ends to make money. I implore and encourage you to do the same, as you use a negative life event, to bring about a positive life change. The greatest business magnates and moguls were able to achieve their success because they had alternate livelihoods to buttress the potential collapse of another. When you limit yourself and

neglect your potential, you do yourself a grand disservice and injustice. Failing to plan equates to planning to fail, so I entreat you to do otherwise.

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