

THE FREEPORT NEWS

GRAND BAHAMA'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

The Nassau Guardian (1844) Ltd

Monday, July 24, 2006

Local/National News

Guana Cay dispute

By ANGELO ARMBRISTER

Freeport News Reporter

angelo@nasguard.com



Bakers Bay Development is once again the target of heavy criticism from Grand Bahama Human Rights President Fred Smith for allegedly not allowing Bahamians to enjoy the beaches of Guana Cay.

According to Smith this blatant act of disrespect took place on the nation's 33rd birthday, a holiday on which many Bahamians would gather at the beach with relatives and friends to celebrate.

Describing it as the beginning of the end for Bahamians in Guana Cay, Smith said it only proves that the multi-million dollar development company's promises to respect local rights and preserve the environment for Bahamians to continue to enjoy were simply publicity stunts.

"On July 10, 2006, many residents of Guana Cay, as has been their habit for decades, visited the public beaches at Bakers Bay to relax and enjoy the same with their families, only to be met by Bakers Bay guards and management demanding that the Bahamians leave the public beach at Bakers Bay," Smith claimed in a press statement.

The human rights activist claimed that Anthony Roberts and his family were targeted that day and have since been the subject of police persecution initiated by Bakers Bay.

Roberts is quoted in a statement saying that as he and his family prepared for a barbecue they were approached by a security guard.

"I went to enjoy the beach on Independence Day and I told Caleb to grab some firewood out of the bush and Luke, my two-year-old son, followed and sat on a little boat," he said. "By then I had gotten to the beach and grabbed some palm tree leaves to help light the barbecue fire. While doing so a guard came up and told me, 'You can't light a fire on the beach!'"

The statement further said that Roberts then asked to use the Bakers Bay grill that is set up on the beach to accommodate their guests.

"The guard said that he did not have authority to let me use the Bakers Bay grill which is used for all the foreign guests to have barbecues on the beach," it read.

After that Roberts insisted that he would use the beach for his barbecue.

"Then Carter Reed (Bakers Bay Manager) came and told me that I had to leave," explained Roberts. "I told him this is a public beach and he said 'No! It is not.'"

Roberts then told the manager to call the police and leave him and his family alone.

Instead Reed called for more guards who Roberts said surrounded him and his children.

"When I was trying to light my fire the guards kept standing next to it so that if I lit it they would get burnt. I did not want to burn the guards. I did not want a scene. I just wanted to enjoy the beach with my family and friends on Independence Day," he said.

Eventually an argument ensued and the police were called in.

Two days later Roberts had a meeting with Police Superintendent Miller, who told him that the people at Bakers Bay had filed an injunction on him banning him from the beach.

"I told them I was a Bahamian and had a right to go on the beaches in The Bahamas and that I did not know that Bakers Bay had made Guana Cay a Communist country," Roberts said.

Smith, who is also Roberts' attorney, said this highlights the stark reality of Bahamians becoming foreigners in their own land.

"In particular, that the PLP Government has failed to provide protection for Bahamians for preservation of their culture, environment or community in the face of mega developments and anchor projects, which benefit only the foreigners and not Bahamians," he said. "It is ironic that on Bahamian Independence Day that foreigners can kick Bahamians off their own beaches."

Smith revealed that Roberts will be suing the police for harassment and misfeasance. He further said that the Bakers Bay will be sued for declarations that Roberts and his family have no right to use the beaches at Guana Cay.

[E-mail this story to a friend](#) | [Printer-friendly version](#)