



*Government of Bermuda*  
Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports

## ***The Mirrors Programme 2014 Welcome Home Ceremony***

### **Ministerial Statement**

To The Senate

By

**Senator Alexis Swan, J.P.**  
***Junior Minister of Community, Culture and Sports***

**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014**

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**Madam President**, during the week of November 17 – 22, 2014, the Mirrors Programme hosted its 10<sup>th</sup> intensive residential programme for young adults aged 15 to 19. I am pleased to report to the Senate that on Sunday evening, 23 November 2014, Mirrors celebrated the culmination of the residential phase of sixteen (16) young people's journey with a Welcome Home Ceremony held at the Whitney Institute Middle School.

**Madam President**, although I was not present at the Welcome Home Ceremony, by all accounts it was a very exhilarating experience. I say experience rather than event since I understand that all the attendees including participants, committed partners, volunteers, Mirrors staff, parliamentarians, family and friends were transformed by the powerful testimonies of the young men and women who moved to a new phase of their lives.

**Madam President**, The celebration was an acknowledgment of both an ending and a beginning for 16 mature, bold and self-aware young adults who identified that there was something more they wanted for their lives. Each of these young adults said yes to an opportunity to transform their lives and transcend themselves beyond their limitations. Within the last 10 weeks each of these young adults identified the challenges that existed in their lives – lack of self-confidence, challenges focusing, alcohol and or substance-abuse, difficulty trusting, dissatisfaction in relationships with adults, academic failure – to name a few - and make the powerful choice to look within and confront themselves in order to experience life differently moving forward.

**Madam President,** The intensive residential was a six-day journey of intense self-reflection, challenging physical activity and exploration of what's possible for the future. During the six days the young adults endured early mornings, late nights and long hours inside of the course room examining who they have been in their lives, the results they have produced as a result of who they have been, and what they are now making a commitment to in their lives as a result of their awakening. The young adults placed themselves in a position of vulnerability that most adults would not, which is a tremendous achievement as they realized that if they wanted something different for their lives they had to go beyond the level of thinking they had before participating in the programme.

**Madam President,** Eleven (11) of the participants in Mirrors Cohort 10 are young black males. Many of the 16 participants have experimented with marijuana and alcohol, or have been in trouble with the law or been suspended at one time or another during their academic career.

**Madam President,** Early in the course, the course leader recognized that this group gave him permission to work with them and explore the dysfunctions in their lives more so than in any other course he has lead. The emotional baggage he was able to address as a result of this was profound - low self-worth, depression, anger, self-deprecating attitudes, self-harm and suicide attempts. Once these conversations were dispelled, the course leader could see that he truly *was* working with future leaders of Bermuda – persons that have the potential to become doctors, athletes and artists, among other things. The course leader described the residential as the most powerful Mirrors Residential delivered to date.

**Madam President,** during the next 9 months, until August 2015, and with the support of an adult volunteer from the community, these young adults will have the opportunity to action the goals that they said they wanted to accomplish during the residential. They will meet with their committed partner on a weekly basis setting weekly action steps intended to support them in accomplishing their goals by the end of the 9 months. In addition they will also meet as a group on a monthly basis, one Saturday per month, to allow them the opportunity for continued growth in their personal development.

**Madam President,** These young people have embarked on a journey with an

organisation that has proven results. To date, Mirrors has serviced over 720 young people in personal development through its Community programme, the Coaching for Success programme offered at the middle school level, and its mentoring programme at the primary school level.

**Madam President,** Since its inception in 2007, Mirrors has had considerable success, with 92% of participants in the Community programme being law abiding citizens 2 years post programming, and 82% of participants in the process of receiving or have received their high school diploma/GED.

**Madam President,** The Mirrors Programme has proven that it is a worthwhile investment that Bermuda can be proud of. The Mirrors Programme is truly about the business of transforming the community of Bermuda one person at a time; a task which undoubtedly Bermuda is benefiting from now and will continue to benefit from in the future.

Thank you.