

Biography

Mr. Clayton Leroy Fernander, QPM
Commissioner of Police
Royal Bahamas Police Force



The ascension to the top spot of the premier law enforcement agency in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas is an ambition that many in the rank and file hold, yet only a few have come to realize. In fact, thousands of Bahamians have enlisted into the Royal Bahamas Police Force since 1973, but only 9 thus far, have been appointed Commissioner of Police. This sobering statement of self-actualization and professional accomplishment is not lost on Commissioner Clayton Leroy Fernander, who enlisted into the Force on July 27, 1982. For him, it was a long journey from San Salvador, to the inner city of Bain Town, to the top floor at Police Headquarters.

Commissioner Fernander is the third son to his parents Minerva Butler and the late Wellington Fernander. He was born on the picturesque Island of San Salvador and later moved with his family to New Providence on Eneas Lane in the Bain Town Community. He attributes all that is good in him to his mother Minerva and his late grandmother, Elvina Walker, who raised him and his siblings with a nurturing, but firm hand.

His fascination with police detective stories from an early age made him desirous of becoming a police detective. His passion became a reality when he opted to join the Royal Bahamas Police Force immediately after he graduated from the C.C. Sweeting Senior High School. As a fledgling young officer, he became enamored with the policing technique and style of several senior police detectives whom he continues to pay homage to at consequential opportunities. Accordingly, his style was hugely influenced by the late Assistant Commissioner Basil Dean, otherwise known as the “Shaft” around town, Superintendents Douglas Hanna, Garth Johnson and Raymond Mackey. During his formative years, he often witnessed these officers patrolling and arresting criminals in his neighborhood and vicariously envisioned himself in that policing role.

After successfully completing his initial police training program, Commissioner Fernander was posted at the Traffic Division where he began his illustrious police career as a traffic investigator. Notwithstanding, the magnitude of his tremendous impact on the Royal Bahamas Police Force and policing would not reveal itself until after his transfer to the Criminal Investigations Department on May 21, 1984. He made an indelible mark on criminal investigations for 28 consecutive years while simultaneously fulfilling his childhood dream of becoming a police detective. He thoroughly enjoyed his work and relished every moment having served in numerous high profile roles in Serious Crime, Stolen Vehicle, Armed Robbery, and Homicide Investigations. Eventually he assumed the top position in the Department and essentially became the lead detective throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. Notably, he was the interim Commander at CID for several stints.

He served in other capacities throughout the Force as Divisional Commander for the Southeastern Division and the Divisional Commander for the Southern Division. His rise to the top is underpinned by his fearless work, bravery, plain speaking ability and diligence that led to the closure of numerous high-profile murder, firearm and armed robbery cases. His drive and sheer determination in the trenches has kept the Bahamian citizenry safe for many years. He is a firm advocate for leading by example and his experience, humility and noted investigative instincts have undoubtedly cemented his legacy as a trusted and respected police officer.

In 2013, Commissioner Fernander was confronted by criminal elements and was shot in the line of duty during a botched attempted armed robbery. Despite his injuries at the time, which caused excruciating pain and profuse bleeding, his adrenaline rush allowed him and a team of officers to aggressively pursue 2 suspects who were subsequently arrested within 24 hours of the crime. Both suspects were charged, convicted and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment at The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services by the Supreme Court of The Bahamas. Commissioner Fernander is marred by the shooting incident and suffers permanent damage to one hand. Although he has lost some function to that limb, he is a tried and tested leader that will not allow criminal mischief to permeate or deter his resolve in upholding the tenets of courage, integrity and loyalty, which forms the foundation of the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Other notable achievements in his career include his appointment as Officer-In-Charge of the Selective Enforcement Unit, which was established to suppress gang activity and arrest prolific offenders. He entered the gazetted rank in 2006 on his promotion to Assistant Superintendent and rose to the rank of Superintendent in

2011. He was promoted to the rank of Chief Superintendent in 2014 and simultaneously became the Officer-In-Charge of the Central Detective Unit. During the ensuing years, he was promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police in 2017 and became a part of the Senior Executive Leadership Team. He assumed responsibility of the Crime Management Portfolio in his new mantle of leadership. At this point, he paused and realized that he had exceeded his childhood aspirations and was comfortably performing in a sphere beyond his most imaginative expectations.

Commissioner Fernander's prowess in criminal investigations include a combination of career experiences and the completion of several professional police training courses from top law enforcement institutions at a local, regional and international level. He received various training from top experts in the policing field as delineated below:

1. Homicide Investigation Training, Scotland Yard Instructors;
2. Leadership, Ethics and Self-Development, Police Training College;
3. Management Development Course, Colombia (Sponsor – United States Department of State, 2018);
4. Management Development Course, El Salvador (Sponsor - United States Department of State, 2010);
5. Criminal Investigation & Intelligence, Wakefield Academy, United Kingdom, 2007; and
6. Motorcycle Identification and Auto-Theft Symposium, Miami, Florida 2004.

To compliment his professional police training and stellar career, Commissioner Fernander is a highly decorated gazetted police officer having been awarded several medals, accolades and commendations from the highest order including:

1. The Queen's Police Medal (QPM) for Distinguished Police Service;
2. Police Medal Clasp for Meritorious Service;
3. Police Medal Clasp for Long Service and Good Conduct;
4. Police Medal Award for Meritorious Service;
5. Police Medal Award for Long Service and Good Conduct; and
6. Commissioner's Commendation for Stellar Leadership and Good Work.

Despite his experience as a seasoned police officer, his training and sacrifices, Commissioner Fernander faced adversity in 2019 as he was unceremoniously sent on vacation leave and subsequently reassigned to another government agency in 2020. He chalks this experience up to a test, a plight that was his to bear. However, he remained steadfast in his Christian faith and trusted that the Lord would guide

him through. He believes that Acts 4:11 from the New American Standard Bible applies to his situation in many ways, which states...“[the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone]...”

Commissioner Fernander takes solace in the belief that he navigated to his current position, his current place, and his current space by the grace of God. He had to experience his challenges in order to arrive at his present destination, which is a herculean assignment for which he is well equipped to handle. Accordingly, he strongly identifies with the underdog effect which posits that...“successful individuals need to have those disadvantages because the struggle to succeed against seemingly insurmountable odds is important for growth....”

His faith in the Lord kept him strong and he was restored to active duty in September 2021 to assist with the growing crime concerns in The Bahamas. By December 2021, he was appointed to the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police, which was made retroactive to June 2021. With his new mantle of leadership, he assumed the Criminal Investigations and Intelligence Portfolio. However, his tenure as 2nd in Command of the Force would be a succinct one as he made history on July 5, 2022 becoming the 9th Commissioner of Police appointed under an Independent Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

Commissioner Fernander is a visionary leader who is passionate about stemming the tide of crime in the Bahamian society through the proper restructuring of the Force and the help of all Bahamians. To that end, he has taken the bull by the horn with many bold and transformative initiatives to improve accountability, criminal investigations, public relations and the overall image of the Force. Notably, Commissioner Fernander has approved the establishment of the Law Enforcement Empowerment and Preparedness Program (LEEAP) within the Urban Renewal Division to assist potential recruits in realizing their goal of joining one of the law enforcement agencies in The Bahamas. This program will assist individuals who are unable to pass the traditional entrance examinations with tutors and special training that will provide a chance and put them in contention for consideration of recruitment.

Commissioner Fernander worships at Zion Baptist Church on East and Shirley Streets. He is married to Christine Bowe-Fernander a retired Nursing Officer at the Princess Margret Hospital. They are the proud parents of 2 children: Police Inspector Jason Fernander and Healthcare Administrator Giana Fernander. Commissioner Fernander enjoys watching track and field competitions and the NBA during his spare time.