

Thomas Holmes

Guidance Counsellor and President of CariMAN (Dominica) Chapter Inc



Thomas Holmes, married with two children (boy and girl), is a citizen of the Commonwealth of Dominica, an island situated between the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

In July 1977, upon graduation from the St. Mary's Academy Secondary School, Thomas left home and traveled to Antigua where he joined the Congregation of Christian Brothers, a Catholic Religious Order engaged in teaching, both at the Primary and Secondary school levels.

Thomas Holmes lived with the Christian Brothers for ten years during which time he studied and taught in Antigua, Dominica and Canada (Toronto and Newfoundland). He obtained two Bachelor's Degrees: Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education.

He ended his tenure as a Christian Brother and travelled to Saba, Netherland Antilles, where he lived and taught for three years and taught at the Saba Sacred Heart Primary School, the only primary school on the island. Upon his return to his homeland Dominica in 1992, he served as Vice Principal and Acting Principal of the Catholic Church-run school, St. Martin Secondary, an all-girls school.

He then became the recipient of a DFID Scholarship to study Guidance and Counselling at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom. He was successful in obtaining a Masters Degree in Guidance and Counselling. When he returned to Dominica he was initially assigned to two secondary schools and that number increased and presently he is serving as Guidance Counsellor at twenty-six (26) primary and secondary schools. He also provides support to the sole Tertiary Institution and the Early Childhood Education.

In addition he holds the following positions:

- President, CariMAN (Dominica) Chapter Inc.
- Tutor, Masters of Counselling Programme, University of the West Indies
- Steering Committee member of the National HIV and AIDS Policy

- Executive Chair, EDUCAN (HIV Coordinators in the Education Sector)
- Ministry of Education HIV Focal Point
- Coordinator, Character Counts! Programme
- Coordinator of the Ministry of Education *Monitoring and Evaluation* and *HIV & AIDS Policy in Education Project*
- Executive member, Dominica Cadet Corps Central Committee
- Judge, Kiwanis Club Secondary School Debates

His quest for peace, respect and a violent-free society realizes his collaborative work with significant key stakeholders and agencies including UN Women of the United Nations, Bureau of Gender Affairs, Youth Division, Drug Prevention Unit, National HIV and AIDS Response Programme, Caribbean HIV and AIDS Alliance, CARICOM Youth Ambassador, and the Child Abuse Prevention Unit.

One of Thomas' greatest satisfactions, outside of his family whom he highly upholds, can be found in his work with young people. His work with the youth began many years ago from a catechist in the Catholic Church to an officer in the Ministry of Education. Presently he places great emphasis on the personal, social, academic, and spiritual development of young people, particularly boys and young males, to help keep them on the path of peace and away from violence. CariMAN opens another path for him to be an active advocate for peace and end to violence.

His continued involvement in Education and CariMAN are signature to his support for better education opportunities for young people and for the prevention of violence and spread of HIV. He places emphasis on the reduction and eventual elimination of Gender-Based Violence, particularly violence against women and children. However, he is also very concerned about the rise of the incidence of violence among males, especially young males. He believes that involvement in violence does not only negatively impact the victims and the families but also inhibits the progress and freedom of the perpetrators and negatively impacts the countries' growth and productivity.

Thomas has travelled most of the Caribbean islands as visitor, and also to attend and make presentations at meetings, workshops and training. However, this is his first visit to the Bahamas, of which he has heard so much positive.

Thomas believes deeply in God his Creator whom he believes gives him the strength, perseverance and joy to perform his duties in the efforts to bring happiness to all people through positive and meaningful relationships.

He strongly believes that we can all live in peace with one another when we duly respect each other.