

COMMENTARY *By* **DR. DHANPAUL NARINE**

Justice Anthony Carmona

Becomes President of Trinidad and Tobago!



Dr. Dhanpaul Narine

Justice Anthony Carmona has had a distinguished record of service for his native Trinidad and Tobago, and for the international community as well. He is a Caribbeanist at heart. His student days in Trinidad, Jamaica and Barbados enabled him to appreciate the diversity of the Caribbean and the possibilities that it offers for integration. Anthony's visit to Guyana has shown him how rich the country is in human and economic resources.

It is hardly surprising that with his department and experience high honors would come his way. He was appointed to several top positions in the judicial system in Trinidad. A prestigious honor was conferred on him when he was elected on the first ballot as a United Nations prosecutor.

Anthony spent four years at The Hague where he was known for his hard work and attention to detail. He returned to Trinidad in 2004 and worked for ten years as a judge, up to 2014. Then a series of events took place that would change his life forever.

The first was from The Hague. Anthony was appointed as an international criminal court judge. This meant that he had to resign his position in Trinidad. He duly finished his last case and proceeded up the stairs in his Port-of-Spain office. It was a Friday and he was in the Judge's Common Room. The nomination for the President of Trinidad had to be made on the following Monday and it was widely discussed.

Anthony said in jest to a colleague, 'a number of names were mentioned for President but I don't think that any of them will get it.' Anthony drove himself home and out of the blue he received a call that Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar wanted to see him. Anthony replied politely that his ticket had arrived and he was packing to leave for The Hague.

He had seen his new

names but his name was on her mind and she told no one.

How did he feel be-

my country. You realize that life is about progression and it dawns upon you that life operates

for the people and that it must be inclusive,' he said.

Whenever he met with heads of state, or received the credentials of ambassadors, Anthony would invite at least twelve secondary students. When the president of China visited Trinidad there was a local student that conversed with President Xi Jinping in Mandarin. She had learned the language at the Confucius Institute at the St. Augustine campus in Trinidad.

Anthony took the presidency to the people. He would visit schools and speak in the classrooms. It gave him a good opportunity to meet with students and to address their problems. There were instances when such interactions would make a positive difference, especially when he addressed questions of bullying and the need for students to take their studies seriously.

Anthony has become the patron of a number of different organizations. He is active in conservation education. Recently, a number of schools took part in a competition on the environment and Anthony visited the schools and spoke about the need for conservation. His lectures added positively to the discussion and were welcomed by the students and staff alike.

Over the years, Anthony has met with many world leaders. Who has impressed him the most? He said, 'Every world leader I met had his or her positive attributes. The President of China Mr. Jinping was warm and outgoing as was Mr. Maduro from Venezuela. The President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, impressed me by creating a structure in which over fifty percent



Justice Anthony Carmona, former President of Trinidad and Tobago, is a respected statesman and a credible voice for world peace.

office; boxes were in containers and his gown was pressed and ready to be worn! It appeared that nothing could stop him from leaving Trinidad. But he was wrong. He was told that the Prime Minister wanted to speak to him 'and it might result in a cancellation of his trip to The Hague.' How did Anthony take the news?

'When I heard this I remember pulling the car aside. Tears came to my eyes and I prayed. It dawned on me that the only job that could keep me in Trinidad was to be the President of the country. I was a public servant all my life and



Anthony Carmona with his wife Reema. They work selflessly to improve life for all in Trinidad and Tobago.

altruism came naturally to me. As it turned out, I was nominated and my name went in on Monday.' Anthony recalls the Prime Minister telling him that there were many

coming President? 'It was a humbling experience,' Anthony said. 'I never thought that with my humble upbringing that I would rise to become the President of

exponentially.' Anthony found the presidency to be rewarding and challenging. 'I approached it on the basis of total independence. I felt that the presidency has to work

of the decision-makers were women. He was the first native leader in the modern era. We attended his inauguration and he treated Trinidad and Tobago great respect.'

Anthony Carmona was a president with a difference. He was frank, outspoken and engaging. He would go into Parliament and tell parliamentarians to put the people first. Anthony has earned the respect from people in all walks of life. He is approachable, engaging and modest. The children see him as a father figure that looks out for their welfare. Anthony is proud of his wife Reema and the contributions she is making in the community.

Reema is against child marriages and is active in promoting healthy lifestyles. She runs marathons and is an advocate for sports among the young. Reema is one of five First Ladies of the world to receive a Global Impact Leadership Award in New York, for her advocacy and inspirational work.

Justice Anthony Carmona is a statesman and an inspiration to his nation and the rest of the world. He is a champion of Caribbean integration and world peace. He believes that, 'peace and security of our planet must be based on the collective actions of all nations, not a few, however powerful they may be.'

Justice Carmona delivered the keynote address at the Universal Peace Federation World Summit in Seoul, Korea, in February 2019. The address was well received and it will be published here exclusively in our next edition.

The views expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the THE WEST INDIAN.