

International Forest of Friendship for the Celebration 2017

La'Shanda Holmes, Fayetteville, NC, is a Lieutenant in the U.S. Coast Guard and is the Coast Guard's first African-American female helicopter pilot. After growing up in the foster care system, she put herself through college, became a pilot, and amassed over 1,500 flight hours conducting search and rescue, counter drug, law enforcement, and Presidential air-intercept missions. In 2015 she competed with over 1,000 applicants for one of the most prestigious fellowships in the country – The White House Fellows Program – and was subsequently appointed by President Obama to be 1 of 16 White House Fellows. She spent 2015-2016 in Washington, DC interfacing with the highest levels of government, studying policy issues domestically and abroad, and serving as the Special Assistant to the NASA Administrator, General Charles F. Bolden. Currently, LT Holmes is an Aircraft Commander at US Coast Guard Air Station Miami, responsible for a crew of 4 and a \$9M dollar aircraft and tasked to respond to all search and rescue emergencies, drug and migrant interdictions, and marine environmental protection during day/night, all weather/sea conditions, and long range deployments.

She is a Bonner Scholar, a graduate from Spelman College, and is a graduate student at Oklahoma University. She currently serves as a board member of Foster Club and Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum, two non-profits dedicated to educating, representing, and inspiring foster youth and young aviation enthusiast. LT Holmes has committed her life to one of excellence and devoted much of her time and resources to mentoring and encouraging youth to pursue their dreams, overcome adversity, and become STEM champions.

Her honors include the 2014 Blacks in Government award, selection as one of Griot's Top 100 History Makers, and a nomination for an NAACP award for her work on The Smithsonian's "Black Wings" documentary.