

# EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH FASHION, FITNESS, BUSINESS & MORE

*with Khnuma Simmonds*

**I**ntroducing Khnuma Simmonds, a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Crucian woman whose pride for her heritage runs deep. This woman of many hats has made her life's work focused on women empowerment and is passionate about her island home, the people and the community as a whole. In 2011, Simmonds opened a women's boutique called My Girlfriend's Closet (MGC) with a mission in mind to "empower women through fashion, faith and friendship." In creating this welcoming environment for women of all backgrounds, Simmonds offered exclusive art and fashion items at her store. "I wanted MGC to have a high end feel while being this open, welcoming and comforting safe space for women," said Simmonds.

Over time, the word that best described the vibe and feeling of MGC was "Girlfriendism," the art of being a girlfriend whose empowerment serves other women in friendship, business and beyond. Simmonds recently launched a "Girlfriendism Campaign" in August 2020 which includes six different businesses under the Girlfriendism umbrella: fashion, fitness, wellness, business, travel and H.O.P.E. "Girlfriendism is the business that encompasses all of my many hats," she said, "with each piece coming together to complete my vision of women empowerment."



My Girlfriend's Closet is the fashion piece and Sokh Caribbean Dance Fitness is the fitness arm. Simmonds leads weekly dance classes that focus more on what makes women beautiful and less on how many calories are burned. Through the rhythms of Kizomba (Angolan music), reggae, soca, calypso and bachata, women are encouraged to get comfortable in their own skin. The wellness piece incorporates Simmonds' mental health work and experience working with domestic violence survivors. Equipped with a B.A. in Communications and a M.A. in Education Guidance and Counseling, Simmonds creates wellness sessions centered on care, purpose and mindfulness. On the business side, the emphasis is on women interested in entrepreneurship where "women are coached in identifying their purpose and attaining their vision."

The nonprofit piece of the Girlfriendism umbrella is H.O.P.E. which stands for Helping Ordinary People Every Day to be extraordinary through the arts and creative expression. The nonprofit supports those who suffer trauma as a result of domestic and sexual violence by using the arts to reduce stress.

Simmonds' upcoming Girlfriendism Retreat will take place July 30 to Aug 1, culminating on National Girlfriend Day (August 1). Various workshops will cover all sectors of girlfriendism and will be led by local and visiting women professionals.

"Highlighting local women-owned businesses while collaborating with women in business both locally and nationally is the epitome of Girlfriendism," said Simmonds. Ultimately, the goal is to take Girlfriendism from a local concept to a global vision. It's clear that Simmonds is well on her way to doing so and bringing those in the community along with her. To learn more, visit [www.girlfriendism.com](http://www.girlfriendism.com).



*Girlfriends Afternoon: A private sunset social held at Khnuma Simmonds's My Girlfriend's Closet Boutique where women sipped, shopped & shared.*