



UK Association of Black Judges

Newsletter

May 2026

The UK Association of Black Judges aims to be a unifying voice for Black Court Judges, Tribunal Judges, and Coroners across England and Wales. In this newsletter we give an update on some of the activity and engagement over the last few months. In addition, members of the steering group are individually involved in training, and are members of committees, working groups across a range of related bodies committed to advancing diversity and inclusion within the judiciary and the wider legal profession. Do get in touch if you have issues of concern relating to your judicial role or applications, contact us at ukabj@ejudiciary.net.

We held an enjoyable informal reception at the Guildhall on February 13th. The event was an opportunity to meet, network, socialise and share experiences with other Black judges and senior lawyers. We really appreciated those who travelled from outside London and in particular Mrs Indira Demeritte-Francis, President of the Industrial Tribunal Nassau who had attended the launch and came back all the way from the Bahamas!



(Right. Mrs Indira Demeritte-Francis)

Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030

The Judicial Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030 was launched in January. We are pleased to see that specific attention is directed towards increasing the number of Black Judges and providing reasonable adjustments for disabled judicial officeholders.

We questioned why no recruitment targets had been set for appointments. The response is that this is the responsibility of the JAC over which the Judiciary and Judicial Office have no authority. Steps are taken to collaborate with the JAC to achieve great diversity within the judiciary.

The second issue was seeking an explanation of why the high level and clear statement “**Values diversity and shows sensitivity to the different needs of individuals**” does not appear in the new Judicial Skills and Abilities Framework (JSAF). The previous framework, in use since 2014, also required candidates to show “**an awareness of the importance of diversity, takes an anti-discriminatory approach and demonstrates sensitivity to the particular needs of different individuals, communities and groups.**”

The Judicial Office considers that this is covered in the guidance to the framework and that the areas are covered and supports inclusion. UKABJ continue to take issue with this explanation and are of the view that the requirement should be contained in the framework and not merely the guidance. Currently it is insufficiently explicit both to candidates and referees.

We consider that removing the statement is at odds with and undermines the year 1 aim of the 2026-2030 D&I strategy as regards increasing the number of Black judges, in particular at the senior end of the judiciary. We have also pointed out that because of the length of time that some competitions take, the 2014 framework is still in use for some competitions. This means that applicants in competitions governed by the 2014 framework will engage with the diversity competency whereas those in competitions governed by the JSAF may not.

Our principal position is that while we continue to see the overall numbers of Black Judges flatlining, the requirement should be explicit in the new JSAF. We are also in conversation with the senior judiciary with regards to development and mentoring including the possibility of a bespoke scheme for senior appointment.

Other engagement

On 24 March 2026, UKABJ Steering Committee members were invited to the launch event of the Supreme Court’s own Judicial Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030. Along with other judicial networks and representative organisations present, UKABJ contributed ideas which the Supreme Court could use in the formulation of its action plan, with a view to achieving the Strategy’s objectives.

Also in March 2026, members of UKABJ Steering Committee attended a meeting with senior Faculty members of the Judicial College to discuss the College’s draft DEI strategy. We took the opportunity to provide our critique of that document as well as to advise how the strategy could better fit within the commitments expressed under Objective 2 of the latest Judicial D & I Strategy (January 2026).

Call for participants - Research project on Black and Afro-descendant women judges

Those of you who have attended the Association of Women Judges conferences will have met Professor Jarpa Dawuni PhD, Associate Professor Department of Political Science at Howard University, a trailblazing academic who has written books and conducted research on female judges and lawyers of Black and African descent in Africa and the United States. Professor Dawuni and colleagues will be carrying out a research project on the experiences of Black and Afro descendant women judges in 8 national jurisdictions including the UK.

This research has been approved for human subjects' research by the Howard University Institutional Research Board (IRB-2022-0595). No interviewee will be identified by name, and no other information will be provided that could lead to the identification. All interview transcripts will be securely saved in password-protected storage. Informed consent forms will be shared with each judge before the interview.

The interview will be conducted via Zoom on a date and at the time that works for you and last approximately 60-90 minutes.

If interested in participating in the interview or if you would like further information, please contact Judge Munonyedi at tribunaljudge.munonyedi@ejudiciary.net



Opening of the Legal Year 2026

Recent appointments

- ❖ Patricia Tueje as Salaried Employment Judge of the Employment Tribunals. She was appointed as a Fee-paid Employment Judge and First-tier Tribunal, Property Chamber, in 2023.
- ❖ Deborah Sewell as Judge of the First-tier Tribunal, assigned to the Social Entitlement Chamber.
- ❖ Tarisai Zindi as Judge of the First-tier Tribunal, assigned to the Immigration and Asylum Chamber, with effect from 2 March 2026. He was appointed as a Deputy District Judge in 2022.
- ❖ Adeyinka Adedeji as District Judge. She was appointed as a Deputy District Judge in 2022.

❖ Kishma Bolaji as Judge of the First-tier Tribunal, assigned to the Social Entitlement Chamber. She was appointed as a Fee-paid First-tier Tribunal Judge in 2025.

❖ Darryl Balroop appointed as Recorder (Family) assigned to the South Circuit Eastern.

We also congratulate Andrew Powell and Michael Walsh on their appointments as new King's Counsel (KC) in England and Wales.

We wish them all the best in their new roles.

REMINDER

JAC - District Judge Competition is now open and **Closes – 28th May 2026**

There are 50 immediate vacancies and 20 future.

In the application candidates will be asked to indicate, in order of preference, the circuits and jurisdictions in which they would most like to work.

Dates for your diary

Exercise: Deputy Judge of the Upper Tribunal, Tax and Chancery Chamber.

This exercise is launching on 23 July and is looking for 5 candidates. There is an online pre application seminar on Wednesday 20 May @ 5:30 PM to sign up go to

<https://www.judicialcareers.judiciary.uk/civicrm/event/info/?id=2>

25 July — International Day for Judicial Well-being. Promoting Wellness, independence and safety for judges worldwide.

20-26 September Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Annual Conference

“Sustainable Justice, for today, for tomorrow, for all” - Kingston Jamaica. For more information go to the conference website at www.cmja.biz

We welcome volunteers, sponsors and suggestions for events. Let us know where we can assist and please share details of appointments and relevant events that we can share with our members. Contact us at Ukabj@ejudiciary.net



Christian Frederick Cole is said to be one of, or the first of, England's Black Barristers. He was born in the then British colony of Sierra Leone in 1852