



Pioneer African Women in Law

A Digital Archive Series (Vol. 2)



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WHY PAWLIP?

The Pioneer African Women in Law Project (PAWLIP) is a digital archive initiative created to highlight the works and achievements of African Women legal professionals who have paved the way for the women coming after them. These trailblazers have shown the world what a woman in the legal profession can do and, in doing so, have enabled other women to do the same. IAWL shares these women's stories through the website portal as well as on social media.

PROPER ATTRIBUTION

We welcome usage and citation of the materials in this booklet. The entries contained in this booklet remain the intellectual property of the Institute for African Women in Law. Proper citation and referencing is required for usage.

Suggested citation:

Last, First names. Year of publication. Title of the piece. Available at [insert link]. Retrieved [enter date of retrieval].

Example:

Koech, Karen. (2020). Nancy Baraza: First woman Deputy Chief Justice of Kenya. Available at <https://www.africanwomeninlaw.com/african-women-in-law/Nancy-Baraza%2C-Ph.D>. Retrieved April 1, 2021.

OUR R.A.D.I.C.A.L APPROACH

Restoring and preserving the historical agency of the African Woman in Law

Analytically appraising the contributions of African Women in Law

Demarginalizing the voices of African Women in Law

Intellectually centering the lived experiences of African Women in Law

Conscientiously mainstreaming the contributions of African Women in Law

Agenda setting for research on African Women in Law

Leading the way for future generations of African Women in Law



Eulalia Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (Uganda)

First Woman Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Court Justice

By Maureen Mapp, Ph.D.

Justice Eulalia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (1940–2017) was an inspirational figure whose career journey up to the judiciary's 'concrete' ceiling is still record-breaking. Born on the 2nd of September 1940 to a Buganda chief, Eulalia Mukasa-Kikonyogo had access to education. She attended Busuubizi Girls' Primary School (1948–1952), Trinity College, Nabbingo for her Ordinary level studies (1953–1958), and King's College, Budo for her Advanced level studies (1959–1960) before joining Makerere University- then affiliated to the University of London, where she graduated with Bachelor of Arts Certificate (1964–1968). Mukasa-Kikonyogo did a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Anthropology at the Somerville College of the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom (1964–1965) before studying for the Bar at Inner Temple in London. She became a qualified Barrister at Law in 1968.

Mukasa-Kikonyogo was appointed Uganda's first female judge of the High Court in 1986, and after starting her career in the judiciary as a magistrate, she would become the first female Chief Magistrate in 1971. In 1997, was appointed Uganda's first female Supreme Court Judge. In 2001, Mukasa-Kikonyogo was appointed Uganda's first female Deputy Chief Justice and served for almost ten years making her Uganda's longest-serving female Deputy Chief Justice. As Deputy Chief Justice, she was the sixth most powerful person in the government of Uganda. From 2002 to 2004, she was elected as the first African president of the International Association of Women Judges.

Mukasa-Kikonyogo was fearless, always putting the rule of law first, even if it meant squaring up to the Executive arm of government and putting her own life at risk. One landmark decision that exemplifies her commitment to justice is her lead decision following the events of 16th November 2005. On this day, a security Anti-Terrorism Taskforce nicknamed the 'Black Mamba Squad' laid siege to the High Court and forcibly arrested retired Colonel Kizza Besigye, a prominent member of the opposition along with other men jointly accused of treason. Their bail application had been granted by a judge of the High Court, who was later forced to withdraw from the case citing intimidation. The Court of Appeal, led by Mukasa-Kikonyogo, declared the actions by the state as an unjustifiable interference with the right to personal liberty and the right to a fair trial, and a violation of the independence of the judiciary. Her lead judgment in *Uganda Law Society versus Attorney General of Uganda 2005* is a must-read for any scholar of Ugandan constitutional law.



Eulalia Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (Uganda)

First Woman Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Court Justice

By Maureen Mapp, Ph.D.

On the 1st of March 2007, history repeated itself. Acting Chief Justice Mukasa-Kikonyogo was now personally caught up in the events. The same five men--Colonel Besigye included-- were once again violently arrested by armed security forces after being granted bail by another judge of the High Court at Kampala. During the 'second court siege', Mukasa-Kikonyogo protested the invasion of the court. She held a crisis meeting in her chambers and negotiated a deal for the accused persons to be released. After a six-hour siege in which her Ladyship alongside the Principal Judge and other judges were held 'hostage' in the High Court by the security forces. After the men were released at around 8.30 pm, they were once again captured, beaten, and taken away from the High Court in a police car stolen by the security forces.

Justice Mukasa-Kikonyogo kept the courts closed in protest of the attacks by these special operations forces. This moment was significant, as standing up to the executive and shutting down the courts at a time when political tensions ran high sent a firm message about the judiciary's stand on the protection of individual's human rights, and on its own authority. Justice Mukasa-Kikonyogo had other accolades up her sleeve- specifically on the religious front. After years of dedicated service to the Catholic Church, Mukasa-Kikonyogo was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI as one of two African female Dames (Papal Knights) - a first in the history of the Catholic Church in Africa. On her appointment, and in true Kikonyogo style, she told New Vision newspaper in an interview in 2013:

"I am overwhelmed by the Pope's choice. Who am I to be his dame? I only thank God for such a great honour bestowed on me for I don't consider myself deserving..."

This statement sums up Dame Mukasa-Kikonyogo's philosophy of service, a deep sense of commitment to do right, but without seeking fame or feeling deserving of praise. She remained in her home, close to her community. Her sense of fairness was tempered with her concern for the well-being of others. As attorney Karoli Ssemogerere aptly puts it, Mukasa- Kikonyogo was able to combine the role of judge, feminist, and leader while remaining true to her Catholic faith even in public life.



Eulalia Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (Uganda)

First Woman Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Court Justice

By Maureen Mapp, Ph.D.

Mukasa-Kikonyogo's distinguished career journey to the sixth-highest political position in Uganda, and the top of the judiciary leadership was not without its problems. Climbing up the rungs of the male-dominated judiciary was fraught with gender barriers along the way. Some were structural, like being allocated the smallest chambers in the court building not only as a newly appointed High Court judge but again as a senior Supreme Court judge. Gender bias likely motivated those within the judiciary who publicly fought her appointment as Deputy Chief Justice in 2001, claiming that she was ill-suited for the post.

Unsurprisingly, not a shred of evidence of her alleged incompetence has been brought to light. If anything, Mukasa-Kikonyogo was vindicated of such allegations by fellow judges at a meeting chaired by then Chief Justice Sam Wambuzi. The following year, she went on to be elected as Africa's first President of the International Association of Women Judges, an election which is a resounding endorsement of Justice Kikonyogo's competence and capability as a judge at both the national and international level.

As a feminist, Kikonyogo fought for fairness and gender equality, a legacy that lives on in the organizations she co-founded like the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA) formed in 1974, and the National Association of Women Judges- Uganda (NAWJU) established in 1994. With level-headedness that was truly exemplary, she successfully combined being a wife and mother with her demanding political and leadership roles. Although her career highlights the gendered hurdles that women judges face reaching top political and administrative positions, it also shows that if a woman is competent at their work and level-headed, these hurdles are not insurmountable. Significantly, at the time of writing in September 2020, there has not yet been another long-serving female Deputy Chief Justice appointed in Uganda. And, as Dawuni predicts, women will have to fight harder to break the 'concrete' ceiling before a woman is appointed to be Chief Justice in Uganda.



Eulalia Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo (Uganda)

First Woman Deputy Chief Justice, Supreme Court Justice

By Maureen Mapp, Ph.D.

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Eusebia Munuo (Tanzania)

First Woman Judge (Tanzania)

By Maame Efua Addadzi-Koom

Eusebia Nicholas Munuo (née Minde) is a Tanzanian lawyer and a retired Justice of Appeal. Born on 1 September 1946 to Mwalimu Benedict Mirai Minde and Monica Francis Chuwa, Eusebia is the second born in a family of eleven children. Her father, Mwalimu Benedict Mirai Minde, was a teacher (Mwalimu translates to teacher) and her mother was a housewife and farmer.

Eusebia's resilience to rise above the difficulties and complexities of life can be traced to her birthplace - the slopes of Kilimanjaro Mountain at 19,336 feet (5,895 meters). Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the second-highest in the world after Mount Everest in the Himalayas. Eusebia's parents grew up in the culture typical of mountain dwellers which is hard work from childhood to old age. Eusebia understood that people who lived in difficult mountainous terrain naturally had to adapt to hard conditions and pass on the legacy of hard work and determination to their heirs.

Eusebia Munuo grew up in Njari Village in Uru North, some 15km from Moshi Municipality where she attended Uru Mission Primary School from kindergarten to class one to class four from 1952 to 1956. On completing elementary primary school, she was selected to join class five in Kibosho Girls' Middle School about 40 km from Njari village. The Middle School was a boarding school for girls from different catholic elementary schools in Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and Tanga Regions. She pursued her Middle School education from 1957 to 1960 without difficulty and was selected to go to a Catholic Girls' Secondary School, Marian College, now Kirakala Girls High School in Morogoro at the foot of the Uluguru Mountains from 1961 to 1964. Marian College was a territorial girls' boarding school drawing students from catholic middle schools across Tanzania.

On completing form four she joined Tabora Girls' High School where she had her form five and sixth form education from 1965 to 1966. She focused on studying diligently to gain entry into the University of East Africa to study law. By then there were three University Colleges in East Africa namely Makerere in Kampala, Uganda, Nairobi College in Kenya, and Dar es Salaam University in Tanzania. The three colleges constituted the University of East Africa which was dissolved when the old East Africa Community was dismantled in the mid-seventies. National universities were created in the respective East African countries as we see them today. Eusebia had the opportunity to study law at the University of East Africa at Dar es Salaam from July 1967 to March 1970 and obtained a Bachelor of Laws Degree (LL.B.).



Eusebia Munuo (Tanzania)

First Woman Judge (Tanzania)

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In those years, when a person gets selected to study law or any other discipline in a university as Eusebia did, it was considered a rare privilege and vote of confidence by your nation that you have the potential not only to study but participate in the development of your country after completing your studies. Being a direct entrant from high school and determined to learn, Eusebia did not expect any favors from anyone. She took her studies seriously and did not see any challenges for women law students because the law professors at the university were of the right caliber and good academic quality. Abuse of authority for sexual exploitation commonly known as sextortion and other forms of corruption which occasionally threaten women students were unheard of in those days because the majority of citizens were God-fearing and patriotic, leaving no chance for corrupt perpetrators to join university teaching teams.

Eusebia developed an interest in law when she was in form four. She liked reading books of different professions and somehow got attracted to law. From middle school to high school she held the role of the Secretary initially and subsequently Chairperson of the Debating Club conducting school and inter-school debates and at times taking the position of the main speaker of either side. She was familiar with debate contests and her side usually emerged successful. Therefore, she imagined she would preside over cases competently without fear or favor. She chose law because she believed she could use the law as a tool to administer justice and resolve disputes impartially. Although she did not know any lawyer at the time, she imagined law would be an interesting career and fortunately it turned out to be so.

On 1 July 1970, Eusebia became the first woman resident magistrate in Tanzania. Until then the bench was all men. There were also no women court assessors because there was a provision in the old Criminal Procedure Code disqualifying women from being court assessors (jury). The provision was subsequently repealed by Parliament. Eusebia had no difficulty working with her male colleagues because in her law school class of ninety students there were only two women. Being the only woman on the bench initially was no big deal. She only saw her inclusion on the bench as the beginning of women's inclusion.

She encountered no peculiar challenges for women judicial officers in the Judiciary of Tanzania during her 18-year long career of magistracy rising from her first position as a Resident Magistrate Grade III in 1970 to Senior Resident Magistrate in 1982 to Principal Resident Magistrate with extended jurisdiction to hear High Court cases from 1984 to April 1987 when she was appointed a Judge of the High Court.



Eusebia Munuo (Tanzania)

First Woman Judge (Tanzania)

By Maame Efua Addadzi-Koom

Eusebia had no doubt that more female lawyers would continue to be recruited as judicial officers overtime. As of 2019, the number of women in the Primary, District and Court of Resident Magistrate in terms of gender is about 40%. About 30% of the judges in the High Court are women. About 20% of the Justices of Appeal are women.

In August 2002, Eusebia chalked another first. She was appointed the first Lady Justice in the Court of Appeal of Tanzania which is currently the highest court of the land. She was sworn in as the Deputy Chief Justice in 2010. She served in the Court of Appeal from 2002 until she retired ten years later on 1 September 2012. Throughout her judicial career, Eusebia performed several leadership and professional roles. From 1972 to 1975 she doubled as an assistant lecturer at the Institute of Development Mzumbe (IDM) on secondment by the judiciary to train Primary and District Magistrates.

During her time as a Senior Resident Magistrate, she was in charge of the Arusha region from 1982 to 1987. From 1984 to April 1987 she was the Chairperson of the Regional Housing Tribunal determining landlord/tenant disputes with the aid of assessors. She was also the Chairperson of the Regional Local Government Elections Committee responsible for conducting local government elections. She served as a part-time commissioner on the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania from 1984 to 1990. While she was in the High Court, Eusebia was the judge in charge of the Moshi High Court Zone from July 1997 until she joined the Court of Appeal in August 2002.

She was the chairperson of the Judges Ethics committee from 2007 to May 2012 and the National Parole Board from May 2013 to May 2016. She was also a founding member of the Judges and Magistrates Association of Tanzania (JMAT) and the Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA). She served as a board member, Vice President, President-elect, and President of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) between 2006 and 2014. She founded and chaired the Tanzania Women Judges Association (TAWJA) from 2000 to 2010. She was a non-practicing member of the Tanganyika Law Society from March 1978 to December 2012. In January 2013, she became a practicing member of the society to date.



Eusebia Munuo (Tanzania)

First Woman Judge (Tanzania)

By Maame Efua Addadzi-Koom

Eusebia has many awards to her name including the order of the United Republic of Second Class Medal in December 2012, the 2nd annual award of Determined Women in Law in 2012, Tanzania Women Lawyers Association Compassionate Humanitarian, Philosopher and Human Rights Award in 2013, the Women of Achievement Public Sector Award in 2016 and improving access to justice award, Punjab Judicial Academy, Lahore Pakistan in 2017. She also has several publications on child law, women's rights, human rights, succession, environmental law, judicial ethics, women property rights, and sextortion.

As one who joined the judiciary at the young age of 23, Eusebia advises young women wishing to embark on a legal /judicial career that the sky is the limit. Their determination and dedication to legal studies will open opportunities for women in the judiciary, in academia, attorneys for law enforcement agencies, advocates in law firms, corporate lawyers, and as legal staff or paralegals. She believes that the doors are wide open for women lawyers and jurists in all jurisdictions founded on the rule of law, democracy, justice, peace, and security.

Judicial work requires personal and professional integrity, knowledge of the law, skill to apply the same, adherence to judicial code of conduct and ethics, and more importantly honesty and total commitment to hard work. The job is self-supervising. It is an ideal profession for women who aspire to be judges. Eusebia Nicholas Munuo is a pioneer Tanzania woman in law who has paved the way for many generations to come after her.

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Fatma El-Razaz (Egypt)

First Woman Dean of Law (Egypt)

By Omnia Gadalla

Dr. Fatma El-Razaz is the first woman law professor who occupied the dean position for a law school in Egypt, at Helwan University where she teaches. Although Egyptian women have studied law since the 1920s, it took about a century to reach such a milestone. When the profession was dominated by men, Munira Thabit was the first woman to enroll in the French Law School of Cairo in 1924 and the first to earn a License en Droit, enabling her to be registered as the first Arab lawyer and practice law before the Egyptian Mixed Court. In 1929, Naima Al-Ayoubi was the first woman to enroll in the Faculty of Law at an Egyptian University to complete a Bachelor's Degree in 1933 and applied to the Egyptian Bar to be the first female lawyer before the National Courts. Women now account for around half of the students in the Faculties of Law and acquiring first ranks. Egypt has traditionally been a pioneer of development in the region and has a history of feminist politics dating from 1923 when Hoda Sha'arawi helped found the Egyptian Feminist Union.

Fatma El-Razaz was born in 1968 in Paris, France while her mother was studying for her Ph.D. in France. Her family returned to Egypt where she was raised in Cairo and studied at Lycee French School in Egypt. Her father is Dr. Mohamed Ahmed El-Razzar, a Public Finance Law professor at the Faculty of Law, Cairo University, and former Finance Minister. He is her role model and she is always looking up to him. Her mother is Dr. Aisha El-Kelleny, one of the very few women who challenged her family and went to high school in 1953, since it was a misconception that those who go to high school are poor families who want their daughters to graduate and work for others while aristocratic families do not go to school. Her mother challenged the family once again and decided to go to Law School (1956-1960) when there were very few females going to the university. Her mother decided to proceed in her post-graduate studies after being a wife and mother and obtained her Masters in Law and Ph.D. from the Sorbonne University in 1970 while she did not know a French word at the time she started.

Fatma El-Razaz studied Law at Ain Shams University and graduated in 1988, one of the top law graduates in her class. Her passion for law and academia pushed her to proceed in her post-graduate studies. She obtained her master's in law from the same university in 1991 and pursued a Ph.D. in very a sophisticated and novel specialization –at that time– in Civil Law. She got her doctorate in 1998 from Cairo University Law School. She joined Helwan University law school at the Social Laws (including Labor Law) Department as an Assistant Lecturer in June 1995 and promoted to Lecturer in 1998. During that time, she traveled to France many times during her research to collect materials and make her thesis original and comparative.



Fatma El-Razaz (Egypt)

First Woman Dean of Law (Egypt)

By Omnia Gadalla

In October 2003, she became an Assistant Professor, and in December 2008, she became a Professor till date. She is one of few female law professors and heads of departments (from May 2015 till October 2019). She was Acting Dean from October 2018 until she was officially appointed to the position as Dean in 2019. Before joining academia, she worked as a legal advisor and lawyer at the Accountability State Authority from June 1989 till June 1995. Later, she got appointed in the Administrative Prosecution (Semi-judicial Authority) but resigned due to her passion for academia. She did not think to apply to the State Council (Administrative Judiciary) nor the Public Prosecution (the normal path to the Ordinary Judiciary) at that time since it was, and still is banning women applicants.

Applying for the law school dean position was a challenging idea and competitive process -let alone risky for being a woman, since the 24 law schools in Egypt -public and private universities- have never had a woman dean. At the time she applied to hold the position, there were two applicants. She was optimistic, motivated, and encouraged by her husband, and her personal will to empower women and promote them to the high posts and decision-making process, especially after Egypt adopted the UN Sustainable Development goals (2030 Roadmap) and the African Agenda 2063 which includes gender equality in all spheres of life. She submitted a plan for developing the law school and was invited for an interview by two members of the University Board and two members of the Law Faculty Board to assess the applicants with marks. This assessment goes through a review process which includes the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Interiors-Security Department, the Minister of the Higher Education, the Cabinet, then approval by the President. In the end, she excelled and became the Dean on 17 March 2019.

In parallel with academia, and after achieving great strides in both her education and professional life, she got exposed to practical life. That's why she joined the bar and became a lawyer before the Supreme Courts (Cassation, Supreme Administrative Court, and Constitutional Court lawyer). Being an eminent professor in Labor Law, she got selected as the Legal Counsel for labor legal relations at the Egyptian Industries Federation in October 2015, and supervisor on the Work Affairs Unit at the same Federation in May 2015. She contributed immensely to the Human Resources Academy since its establishment in 2018, which is a project to promote gender equality in the work environment, with support from the Embassy of Finland, Egyptian Industries Federation, Business Men Association, and International Labor Organization (ILO). It works on three angles, legal, gender, and human resources and she was in charge of the legal section.



Fatma El-Razaz (Egypt)

First Woman Dean of Law (Egypt)

By Omnia Gadalla

Fatma El-Razaz has always been involved in reviewing labor laws, regulations, union and syndicate laws. Her contributions are not only in the national arena but also extend to the regional and international arena. She is a Social Laws expert in the International Labor Law, as well as the Legal Advisor of the Arab Woman Organization from July 2004 till December 2014. Later, she became a member of the Women Committee at the Arab Labor Organization. Her remarkable achievements led to her selection as a member of the Egyptian delegation for the International Labor Organization, discussing the international convention of the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (190) adopted in 2019 – ILO conference. She participated in the discussions and got exposed to the convention drafting process for three years.

Based on her long academic and practical experience, Fatma El-Razaz was selected as a member of the selection committees of the Legal and Economic Studies – Faculty of Law Review from 2008 to date. She wrote many articles and researches about labor laws and related issues. Many of her publications are devoted to women and child employment, gender equality, equal payment, humane working conditions. Her most recent articles are “Legal Legislative and Economic reforms for Women Economic Empowerment” in 2020 for the ILO. Besides, “Protecting Women Employees in the International Conventions and Egyptian Law” and “Social Protection for the Arab Woman in the Unofficial Sector” for the Arab Labor Organization in 2017/2018.

Throughout her career, she faced gender-based discrimination, which emboldened her to advocate for the rights of women. One of her areas of interest is women's representation in the labor union. Union women members who are represented, take roles and are in charge at the syndicate board and committees are woefully low. Among the 28 syndicate and union committees, many committees don't include women in their composition at all. What's more, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation never had women on board and the situation remains. That drives her to address this absence of women's representation in the decision-making process for the sake of women workers in her research and papers, to put women workers/employee's issues in the work environment on the table, and to seek answers to why women are not represented.

In addition to pursuing a professional life marked with excellence, Dr. Fatma El-Razaz was actively engaged in civil society, serving her faculty and raising awareness in the country. She established the “Women Support Unit in the University” in 2019 and assigned Dr. Naila Oura to chair it.



Fatma El-Razaz (Egypt)

First Woman Dean of Law (Egypt)

By Omnia Gadalla

The Unit was accredited by a ministerial decree in 2019. The Unit provides legal and social services and cooperates with other units and centers in the university to provide comprehensive services, whether inside or outside the university. She had held a series of symposiums at Helwan Law School with Women Support and Anti-Harassment Units at the university to inform and educate the students on the definition of harassment and its different types and forms and how it happens in the workplace. Informing them about the gender stereotypes (you become a lawyer so you are not feminine anymore, your voice becomes tough, you better have a mustache, you better talk like a man, women cannot be judges, you cannot work as an engineer, you better cook at home,...etc), which dehumanizes women, all happened to her personally even now at her age and in her position, some men still challenge and ask her “do you really understand what you are addressing from the legal perspective? Are you able to handle the responsibilities of being a dean?” till she replies and refutes them, so they realize whom they are speaking to.

El-Razaz expressed sorrow towards misconceptions that many Egyptians have about women’s roles and underestimation of their capabilities, which needs collective efforts from the state, regular media, social media, and filmmakers. She notes the negative impact of the media is affecting the image of Egyptian women objectifying her and violating the ethics and values of the Egyptian community at the mindset of a huge number of the Egyptians getting their entertainment from the TV. She wonders where is the drama that promotes women workers and reinforces financial independence and promoting the role of women in the high post.

On a personal level, her husband is a professor in the Medicine Faculty, Zagazig University. He supports her throughout her career and pushed her to apply for the dean position. When she was hesitant, he said “just apply and think later.” She balances prudently between her professional and personal life. She has one sister professor in the engineering school and one brother who studied science and then studied law. She is raising her children on many values including equality, saying “you have to earn your superiority, being privileged or getting the position depends on being more qualified. Life is not a race or a competition between men and women. It is about integrating each other and growing, while working and learning.”



Fatma El-Razaz (Egypt)

First Woman Dean of Law (Egypt)

By Omnia Gadalla

El-Razaz's appointment inspires a lot of female law students and graduates and every Egyptian woman who is still encountered by "No, no woman has ever held this position" and breaks the stereotype that women cannot fit in high positions. She is a notable woman; we have much to learn from her life and work. Fatma El-Razaz's contributions, commitment to the legal community, attainment of gender equality, and promotion of the development and participation of women in law make her an excellent pioneer for Egyptian women generally and for women in law specifically.

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Fatou Bensouda (The Gambia)

First Woman Prosecutor, ICC (The Gambia)

By Mirabelle Chi Epse Okezie

Fatou Bensouda (née Nyang) is a Gambian lawyer and current Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Serving since June 2012, Bensouda is the first woman and first African to assume the role. She was born on 31 January 1961 into a polygamous Muslim family in the Gambia's capital, Banjul (then Bathurst), as one of more than a dozen siblings. Bensouda's father, Omar Gaye Nyang, who worked for the government as a driver, was also a prominent wrestling promoter in the Gambia. He was married to two wives. Though he died from diabetes while Bensouda was still young, his two wives continued relentlessly to raise her and her other siblings.

Bensouda began her early education in the Gambia where she obtained both her primary and secondary school qualifications. During her secondary school days, Bensouda used to sneak into nearby Courts to watch court proceedings and quickly developed a feeling that women were not adequately protected by the law in The Gambia. Bensouda has said that this early experience informed her decision to pursue justice and accountability, and therefore, a career in the legal profession. In 1982, in line with her dreams and aspirations, Bensouda moved to Nigeria to pursue a Bachelor of Law degree (LLB) at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University). After graduating from the University of Ife in 1986, Bensouda immediately enrolled at the Nigerian Law School in Lagos, where she obtained her Barrister-at-Law (BL) professional qualification in 1987. She was called to both the Nigerian and the Gambian Bars in the same year. Bensouda later earned a Master's degree from the International Maritime Law Institute in Malta, becoming the Gambia's first international maritime law expert.

After her impressive academic accomplishments abroad, Bensouda returned to The Gambia and spent several years climbing the ranks of its public legal office. Starting with the Dawda Jawara government, Bensouda was appointed as State Counsel in 1987 and then as Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions in February 1994. When President Yahya Jammeh took power in 1996, Bensouda continued to play a pivotal role in the early years of his administration. She first served Jammeh's government as General Legal Adviser from 1996-1998 and later became Minister of Justice in August 1998, being only the second woman to hold the position. Bensouda was removed from office in 2000 by President Jammeh, whose rule has since been criticized as a dictatorship that carried out gross violations of human rights. Despite her removal, Bensouda earned the admiration of human rights groups, especially for her role in ensuring the speedy prosecution of offenses against women and children during her years of service to her nation. After she was relieved of her government duties, Bensouda transitioned to private legal practice in the Gambia from 2000 -2002.



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Bensouda's international career as a non-government civil servant formally began in 2002 when she was hired to work with the United Nations Ad Hoc International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), sitting in Arusha, Tanzania. She served the ICTR with distinction, starting as Legal Adviser and Trial Attorney before rising to the position of Senior Legal Adviser and Head of Legal Advisory Unit between May 2002 and August 2004. Bensouda carved out a reputation in legal circles for her perseverance in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, especially with regards to rape and other forms of violence against women and children. She then rose to international prominence when she joined the ICC in 2004 as its first Deputy Prosecutor. Elected to the position by the Assembly of State Parties of the ICC, Bensouda's vast experience in prosecutions (national and international) and working with civil organizations, her previous record of advocacy for the rights of women and children, and her good command of both English and French (two of the ICC's working languages) had given her an edge over two other candidates from New Zealand and Fiji.

Bensouda worked under then-Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo from 2004 –2012. She had been nominated by the Assembly of State Parties as the consensus candidate for the position of Chief Prosecutor on December 1, 2011, following informal consultations among ICC member states to identify a suitable candidate. Bensouda was then formally elected to the position by an absolute (two-third) majority of State Parties on 12th December 2011. She assumed full-time duty as Chief Prosecutor of the ICC on 15th June 2012, the first woman and first African to occupy the position. She has been instrumental in the prosecution of major cases including Congolese warlords Thomas Lubanga and Jean-Pierre Bemba and Uganda's Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army. She has also worked on cases from the Central African Republic, Kenya, Libya, Ivory Coast, Sudan, and Georgia among others. Notably, in July 2012, Bensouda secured the conviction of Thomas Lubanga, the first person ever to be convicted by the ICC.

Although Bensouda's decisions as Chief Prosecutor of the ICC are primarily driven by law and the complex tangle of lines defining her jurisdiction, her background as a woman from West Africa has also informed the character of the Court in various visible ways. For example, Bensouda has made it an explicit goal of the ICC to challenge rape and other forms of exploitation against women and children in war. In 2014, to strengthen her office's focus and commitment to the investigation and prosecution of sexual offenses, Bensouda launched a policy paper on sexual and gender-based crimes, the first-ever policy issued by her office.



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The basis of the policy was the explicit inclusion of an expansive list of sexual and gender-based offenses in the ICC's founding statute (the Rome Statute), also marking the first time in international criminal law that such offenses were extensively enumerated as crimes. Representing an important step in the development of international criminal law, Bensouda's policy paper has transformed how the ICC investigates crimes and prosecutes individuals based on the way gender plays a role within mass atrocities, genocide, and wars.

Beyond pursuing a career in the legal profession marked with meritorious growth, Bensouda has also actively engaged in civic and social duties by serving her community, her country, the African continent, and the world at large. Between 1996 and 2000, for instance, Bensouda represented the Gambia in various regional and international negotiations, including negotiations on the establishment of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) Tribunal. She also led the Gambia's delegation to the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Establishment of the ICC. In the Gambia, Bensouda served on the Governing Council of a leading women's rights organization- the Gambia Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices (GAMCOTRAP).

In recognition of her achievements, Bensouda has received various awards. In 2009, she received the distinguished International Court of Justice (ICJ) International Jurists Award for her contribution to criminal law both at national and international levels. In 2011, Bensouda was honored with the World Peace Through Law Award, presented to her by the Whitney Harris World Law Institute in recognition of her work in advancing the rule of law and world peace. In addition to receiving various awards, Bensouda has been listed by Foreign Policy as one of the 'Leading Global Thinkers' (2013); by New African Magazine as one of the 'Most Influential Africans'; and by Jeune Afrique as one of 50 African women who advance the African continent by their actions and initiatives in their respective roles (2014 and 2015).

Bensouda has described her journey to the ICC, and especially her election to the office of Chief Prosecutor, as a victory not only for Gambian women but for African women in general, especially those in the legal profession. Her journey to the ICC exemplifies how African women in the legal profession are breaking boundaries and challenging masculine domination of space and authority in the international justice arena, despite implicit biases and barriers that challenge their success.



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In an interview with the International Bar Association in 2015, commenting on what her role as ICC Chief Prosecutor should mean to African women in the legal profession, Bensouda said: “My role as ICC prosecutor, I hope, is encouraging younger women, other women, to realise that there is no glass ceiling. Whether it’s real or imagined, there is no glass ceiling, and we have the potential to fully grow into what we can be. I sincerely believe that the people of the next generation, or the younger generation who are coming up, will have this in mind. What is important, always I think, is to work very hard and stay focused.” As the first woman and first African Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, not only has Bensouda made valuable contributions to jurisprudence and the development of policies that have had a marked effect on the character of the Court, she represents hope and encouragement to the African woman in law.

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Fatoumata Dembélé Diarra (Mali)

Retired Judge, International Criminal Court (Mali)

By Chidinma Sophia Mong

Judge Fatoumata Dembélé Diarra, the eldest of nine children, was born in 1949 in Koulikoro, Mali to parents who were traders. At the time of her birth, the town of Koulikoro was still a French colony. The colony was perceived as a military project led by the colonial military but came under the authority of a civilian administration in the mid-1980s. Diarra's early life was therefore immersed in a struggle for independence, which the country gained in 1960. Consequently, the colonial history of the area had an immense impact on her path to the field of law.

Education was not a priority of the French colonial administration, particularly for young girls. Only 8% of the population in Mali had received a formal education at the time of independence. However, Diarra was not only allowed access to formal education but was also encouraged by her father to study. This was notably due to the strategic geographical location of Koulikoro, a terminal that linked Mali to the Atlantic Ocean. Diarra was enrolled in primary school in 1956, then obtained her Baccalaureate from the Lycée de Jeunes Filles of Bamako in 1969. She was granted a scholarship by the French Coopération and obtained her Premier Certificat de Licence en Droit (First Certificate of License in Law) at the University of Dakar in 1971. She then returned to Bamako, Mali, and enrolled in the École Nationale D'administration where she obtained the Maîtrise in private law in 1973. A year later, she was granted another scholarship from the French Coopération to study at the prestigious École de la Magistrature in Paris, France in 1975. In her professional capacity, Diarra served as an Examining Magistrate, a Deputy Public. She became Prosecutor, the President of the Criminal Chamber, and the Chamber of Assize of the Court of Appeal of Bamako.

In September 1999, she was appointed the National Director for the Administration of Justice in Mali, a position she held until August 2001. It was during her time at the Department of Justice that Diarra was suggested by Mali to be a candidate for a judgeship position at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). She was elected Judge ad Litem from 2001 to 2003. Her experience at the ICTY paved the way for higher appointments. From 2003 to 2012, she was appointed judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Judge Diarra also served as the First Vice-President of the ICC between 2009 and 2012 (wildlife). After the official end of her term at the ICC, she was appointed to the Constitutional Court in Mali.



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When the 1st Republic led by Modibo Keita was overthrown by Moussa Traoré, Diarra, only 19 at the time, embraced the law as a medium for justice and equity, in the face of Traoré's repressive military dictatorship. Consequently, she seized the realm of civil rights activism by defending the rights of the most vulnerable, particularly disenfranchised women and children, within the various civil society organizations she coordinated. One such organization is the Association des femmes juristes (Association of Women Lawyers) which Judge Diarra founded in 1976 to provide legal assistance to illiterate women. Her success at this endeavor was remarkable because it occurred despite the Traore regime's tight rein on civil society, particularly professional associations such as the judiciary and student unions.

Diarra's association benefited from substantial international support, with funding provided by development agencies, such as USAID, and Belgian and Dutch NGOs. She further consolidated her international networks by participating in training in the United Nations system in New York in 1993, on issues such as the enforcement of international and regional human rights protection norms, with the support of the Fédération Internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme in Bamako in 1998. As such, her prominence as a civil society advocate for women's and children's rights, coupled with the support she had received from international aid donors, gave her particular traction. They may have, in fact, played a determining role in the trajectory of her career, especially in her appointment to the ICTY and the ICC.

Personal experiences from her professional career in Mali and her career at the ICTY, as well as the ICC, prompted her to continue to promote international development networks that foster issues relating to gender rights, women and law, women and peace, and the rights of children. Diarra is the founding president of the Office on Relief for Impoverished Women and Children, as well as the Observatory for the Rights of Women and Children (Observatoire des droits de la femme et de L'Enfant) (ODEF). She continues to provide critical support for women and children in distress through the two structures. Her legal office, the ProBono Center for women and children in Mali, also provides free legal assistance to women. Judge Diarra was a notable member of the National Commission on Trafficking in Children and International Adoption, a commission that serves to protect Malian children against the networks of organized crimes that traffick them to coffee and cocoa plantations in Ivory Coast.



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Her commitment to the advancement of women's rights has also been reflected in her position as Vice President of the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers (Fédération Internationale des Femmes des carrières Juridiques) [FIFCJ] from 1994 to 1997, and Vice President of the Federation of African Lawyers since 1995. Furthermore, she has worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross on humanitarian law and with the Agence de la Francophonie (Agency for the Francophone World) within the framework of the Preparatory Committee on the draft Rules of Procedure and Evidence and on the definition of the Elements of Crimes which fall within the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Judge Diarra is a pioneer in the field of law because she rose beyond the otherwise limiting intersections of her nationality, race, and gender to become a formidable legal voice in her home country. She was also one of the few African women to be elected to the ICC. Ultimately, her record of human rights advocacy and her emphasis on fighting for the rights of disenfranchised women proves that she is a most worthy role model for all women.

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Fatoumata Sylla (Mali)

First Woman Lawyer and Minister of Justice

By Mariama Barro

Fatoumata Sylla, fondly called Fanta Sylla, was born on December 11, 1954, in Ségou. She is the first female Malian lawyer. She later became the first female Batonnière of the Bar Association of Mali. This icon of law was also appointed the Minister of Justice in 2004. Therefore, it is fascinating to know about the credentials she has obtained and her professional career.

Fatoumata Sylla was passionately dedicated to her studies. She earned an LLB and a certificate of private law at the University Of Social Sciences of Toulouse. Fatoumata then obtained an MPhil in public and private international relations (1979-1980) and a certificate of aptitude for the legal profession at the University Paris X Nanterre. The certificate allowed her to begin her professional career the same year, especially after being sworn at the Paris Court of Appeal. She spent her tenure internship (1980-1982) at the professional training center of the bars of the jurisdictions of the Court. After the end of her tenure, she had to choose between staying in France and working in the French administration or returning home to serve her motherland. She made the latter choice without any hesitation because of her attachment to the pink land of Ségou.

Back home, Mrs. Sylla was sworn at the Bamako Court of Appeal in 1982. She became a member of the National Council of the Bar Association from 1987 to 1992. In her own words, the choice to become a lawyer was not made by default, but rather out of desire, pleasure, and love for the profession. The general public got introduced to Fanta Sylla after her remarkable pleadings for President Moussa TRAORE and other dignitaries of his regime accused of the so-called “blood crimes” (1992-1993) and “economic crimes” (1998) trials. The “economic crimes” mostly were related to the embezzlement of financial resources during Traore’s rule while the “blood crimes” were mostly the result of the killing of 300 pro-democracy demonstrators. As a fervent defender of individual and collective freedoms, she had- for long a time- campaigned for the protection and promotion of human rights. It should also be noted that Mrs. SYLLA took a stand in claiming democratic opening and a multiparty system on behalf of the Bar for her country. It made her an incredible supporter of the rule of law, freedom, and democracy after they won the fight. Sylla’s openness and popularity made her a founding member of the International Training Center for Francophone Lawyers. It aims to promote initial and permanent professional training of lawyers who are members of these bars and regional integration as well as to harmonize the law initiated by the OHADA Treaty. This entity was founded in 2000 and worked in close collaboration with the Association Afrique & Droit, which aims to organize training centers and institutes, courses, and seminars for African lawyers.



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Fatoumata Sylla's appointment as the Minister of Justice on May 2, 2004, probably topped her already significant influence in the field of law. She remained in the position until October 3, 2007. Mrs. SYLLA is the first woman appointed to this post. She had given a new face to Malian justice by addressing the roots of evil. She toured around the Timbuktu region as part of her duties. She would never falter before the magistrates and was very demanding towards them to ensure they were doing their jobs properly.

Moreover, it is known to all that she urged the courts to respect the rights of the defendants. Sylla also worked to improve living conditions in prison a priority. It can be unequivocally assessed that Fatoumata Sylla succeeded in doing a remarkable job at the Ministry of Justice. However, it should be recalled that in 2005 when Mali welcomed the OHADA family, she was appointed the President of the Council of Ministers of the Organization for the Harmonization in Africa of Business Law. However, her work was not at all easy, and no one is infallible. That is why some shortcomings caused her to lose the status of the minister in the following elections. Even if President Amadou Toumani TOURÉ was victorious again, her mandate was not renewed, and Maharafa TRAORÉ replaced her.

After her tenure ended, she opened her law firm. Being a lawyer registered with the International Criminal Court, Fanta Sylla is a founding member of the International Criminal Bar and a member of the board of directors in charge of coordinating the sub-Saharan Africa region. In the process, she is the godmother of the cohort of young Malian lawyers of 2014 called the Fanta Sylla Cohort. It is to be noted that she has not stopped her activities. Fanta Sylla participated in the training day of lawyers on criminal practices organized by the International Conference Center of Bamako in 2014. She enjoyed a radiant career of more than 40 years and continues to develop a real passion for law. Regarding her legal and political career, I believe Mrs. Sylla became a pioneer in law as she made extraordinary achievements while remaining attached to her principles and values. No need to remind people that she proved to be Malians' pride as the first female lawyer, the first female Batonnière, the first female Minister of Justice, a founding member of the International Criminal Bar, and a founding member of the International Training Center for French-speaking Lawyers.



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With such a journey, everything suggests that Fanta has devoted much time to the field of law, bringing her success as she has managed to be on the top of the hierarchy to lead men. Thus, she succeeded in bringing her legendary story into the history of great African jurists. So through the eyes of the people worldwide, Fatoumata Sylla is an inspiring and very dynamic figure of law, a role model, and reference for all Malian youth, especially for young girls.

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Florence Arrey (Cameroon)

First Woman Judge, Court of Appeal (Cameroon)

By Jada Brand

Florence Rita Arrey is an amazing example of a woman pioneer. Arrey was born on May 18, 1948, in Cameroon, and while much of her early life is not publicized, she had an expansive career of being a first in many aspects. Much of Florence Rita Arrey's career was focused on criminal justice and politics, specifically the judicial sector. Judge Florence Rita Arrey's notable educational journey included attending secondary school at the Queen of the Holy Rosary College Okoyong (QRC Okoyong) in Cameroon. It was the first girls' secondary school established in Cameroon by the Missionary Sisters from Ireland in 1956. The school is known for being the catalyst in dispelling the traditional ails of illiteracy, early marriages, and early childbirth that many Cameroonian girls were subjected to. It also has a great reputation for producing many successful professional women in multiple disciplines such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, civil servants, administrators, and of course great judicial figures such as Florence Rita Arrey.

Following the QRC Okoyong, Arrey attended post-secondary school at Cameroon College of Arts Science and Technology (CCAST) in Bambili. Judge Florence Rita Arrey attained her Bachelor of Law at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and proceeded to attend the University of London Advanced Institute for Legal Studies where she obtained a diploma in Legal Drafting and a certificate in International Law. Finally, Arrey received a diploma in Magistracy from the National School of Administration and Magistracy, Yaounde.

Judge Florence Rita Arrey was a pioneer and had a career of notable firsts. To begin with, in 1974 Arrey was the first woman to be appointed to the State Counsel in Cameroon. She was subsequently appointed to the Court of Appeals in 1984. Following this accomplishment Arrey was appointed the first woman Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal in 1990. After serving as Chief Justice for ten years, in 2000, Judge Arrey was appointed to the Supreme Court of Cameroon. Florence Rita Arrey was an exceptional woman and embodied the spirit of being a pioneer. In addition to being appointed to the highest court of the land, Arrey also ruled on some landmark cases that changed the society and law of Cameroon. Arrey was heavily involved in cases that advocated for women's rights to own property. For example, in *Alice Fodje v. Ndansi Kette*, a widow was given the right to inherit her husband's property and in *Ngongnassa v. Ngongnassa*, the girl child was given the right of succession to her late father's estate. These two cases were milestones in the attainment of equal rights for women in Cameroon. In addition to holding seats in such high places and changing the rights of women, Florence Rita Arrey has also been the president and vice-president of many illustrious institutions.



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By Jada Brand

In 1994, Justice Arrey founded and presided as the vice-president of the Cameroon chapter of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ). According to the IAWJ, their mission is to, "... promote and empower women judges who can help uproot gender bias, end discriminatory laws, advance gender-responsive courts and promote human rights for all." When Justice Florence Rita Arrey founded the Cameroon chapter she had a few issues that she wanted to bring attention to. These issues included; the appointment of female judges to policy-making positions, overturning precedents prejudicial to women and harmful customs and traditions, judicial activism, and gender awareness for the Judiciary. With the appointment of female judges, Justice Arrey's influence increased the percentage of female state prosecutors and Presidents of Courts to 40% in 1998 from a low percentage reflecting when there were only three women to have ever sat in the High Court.

In addition, along with other female judges, Arrey overturned the precedence that marriages were inherently polygamous which led to the dismantling of customary practices such as forced marriages and child marriages in Cameroon.⁶ Finally, through the IAWJ, Arrey and other Cameroonian members helped bring light to the issue of rape and domestic violence when there was no legislation in place for it. Justice Arrey was an influential figure in establishing and solidifying women's rights in Cameroon. Arrey was also the President of the Cameroon Chapter of the Commonwealth Magistrate and Judges Association.

In 2003, Justice Arrey was appointed as an ad litem judge in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Nine years later she was elected as the vice-president for the ICTR. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is an international court that was established in 1993 by the United Nations Security Council. It was established to judge the people who were responsible for the genocide that plagued Rwanda in 1994. Other mandates of the court were to judge persons who committed serious violations of international law in Rwanda. Justice Florence Rita Arrey has had a career full of advocacy, empowerment, and progress. Her work has been noticed internationally and in 2011 she was named one of Cameroon's most influential women. Influential indeed, Arrey was a pioneer who helped pave the way for powerful and influential women succeeding her.

Justice Florence Rita Arrey is a pioneer for countless reasons. When she began her legal and judicial career there were little to no women who she could identify as career role models. She became a standard of excellence as she advanced her career and established organizations that advocated for the women in her country.



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By Jada Brand

Her success in being appointed to several high courts of the land demonstrated her greatness. She did not stop when she became successful, she made room for more women to experience the success she did. She didn't create a seat at the table but made a whole new table for women to advance themselves and the society around them. Arrey recognized that great work needed to be done and she knew it had to be done through policy. With the help of other organizations and professional women, she paved the way for women to change the direction of their destiny. Justice Florence Rita Arrey is a pioneer in every sense there is, and so is her work and legacy.

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Florence Ndepele Mumba (Zambia)

First Woman High Court Judge (Zambia)

By Alexia Nelson

On December 17, 1948, Florence Ndepele Mwachande Mumba was born in Monze, Zambia. Her father, Symon Donald Mwachande was from Malawi, and her mother, Ira Lucy Somanje Mwachande from Zambia. Her parents had a primary school education and instilled Christian values in their six young children, of which Florence was the second oldest. All of them were sent to school. Florence began her early life in Peter Mainza Village in Chisekesi Monze. Due to the distance of the school from their village, Florence and her eldest sister were homeschooled by their mother for their first 2 grade levels of primary school. This enabled the sisters to learn to read and to write early on, and this allowed them to test out of the first two grades at Hanamaila Primary School in Monze.

Her family relocated when her father found employment in the mining town of Mufulira. The sisters subsequently transferred to Mufulira Central School. During this period, the mother also worked to supplement the family income by taking up farming and sewing clothes for sale. After two years of living in Mufulira, Florence and her sister moved to Kamuchanga Upper Primary School and continued their education to a level equivalent to Grade 8. Florence then attended Chipembi Girls Secondary School in the Central Province of Zambia that was run by Methodist Missionaries until January 1968 when she began studying at the University of Zambia.

Originally, Florence wanted to study theology, but the University did not offer it. She eventually decided to study law and registered at the Law School. Many of her friends advised her against it because the law was perceived to be difficult and had a high failure rate. At that time, Florence was the only female in her class and received legal textbooks from some helpful, senior male students as they were hard to come by in Zambia. She was teased in her classes and told she did not belong as many of her lecturers did not feel women could qualify as lawyers. However, she found encouragement in knowing there was one lady who had completed her law studies, Justice Lombe Chibesakunda, and another, Mrs. Gladys Mutukwa, who was in her second year. At law school, she excelled in moot court competitions. In 1972, Florence along with her classmate Mr. Isaac Dore received a Silver Cup for coming second in the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition in Washington D.C. To this end, the University of Zambia Law School decided to name the Zambian Chapter of the Jessup moot competitions series after the two participants.



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After completing Law school, Florence went to the Law Practice Institute to study for the Bar Exam. She qualified and was called to the Bar in March 1973. She was immediately appointed Counsel in the Ministry of Justice, where she prosecuted criminal cases. She then transferred to the Department of Legal Aid to assist the indigent population in all legal matters including civil and criminal cases. Initially, she received pushback from some of the clients who did not want a woman as their counsel. She had to gain their confidence. After a year's experience, she was able to enjoy her work and learn about challenges, conflict with the law, and humanity from her clients. She noted "I also got to learn that however heinous some of the crimes appeared to be, those who perpetrated them and ended up in court, were just as human as everybody else. They needed support and not ridicule. These lessons made me even more determined to pursue criminal law as a field of study." (International Courts and the African Woman Judge, 2018).

At the beginning of her career, Florence married Fleming Sunday Mumba on 14 December 1974, they went on to raise four children.

In October 1980, Florence Mumba was appointed the first woman judge in the High Court of Zambia. As High Court Judge, she handled civil (family law, contract, inheritance law, and property law) and criminal cases. In 1989, she became the first woman to be appointed to the office of Investigator-General Ombudsman. In this role, she investigated public officials based on complaints from the public. While serving in this position, Florence was elected as Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists in 1994. The following year she helped draft the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the establishment of a Court of Justice for Africa. Also, she worked in the UN Commission on the Status of Women where she and the rest of the Commission recommended that rape be included as a war crime.

The General Assembly accepted the recommendation. In 1997, Florence Mumba was appointed judge of the Supreme Court of Zambia and was also elected as Judge of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (UNICTY) by the UN General Assembly. She served as Vice-President of the Tribunal from 1999 to 2001. She was the first African woman judge to serve in that capacity. She was also an appeal judge of the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) from 2003 to 2005. Upon her return to Zambia, she went back to the Supreme Court. In 2008, she was appointed Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia for two years then returned to the Supreme Court.



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In 2009, she was appointed Reserve Judge of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). Later, in 2012, she was appointed full-time judge of the Supreme Court Chamber of the ECCC where she is currently serving.

Florence played a key role in introducing rape as a war crime as well as a crime against humanity in the statute of the ICTY in 1993. The first trial she presided over was the Furundžija case. It dealt *inter alia*, with the issue of rape as a formal crime. These Tribunals made it clear that the political power of elected officials does not mean they are above the law. Also, the MIFRTP states “as a Trial Chamber member, she sat on the bench in the Kupreskic et al.; Milorad Krnogelac; Dragan Nikolic; Miroslav Deronjic and the case of Sefer Halilovic and presided over the following trials: The Prosecutor vs. Drazen Erdemovic; Dragojula Kunarac et al., Milan Simic and Blagoje Simic et al. As Appeals Chamber Judge, she sat on various cases including Dusko Tadic, Zlatko Aleksovski; Tihomir Blaskic; Miroslav Kvocka et al.; Dario Kordic and Mario Cerkez; Eliezer Niyitegeka; Juvenal Kajelijeli; Jean De Dieu Kamuhanda and Elizaphan and Gerard Ntakirutimana and the contempt proceedings instituted against Milan Vujin.

The more one reads about Florence Mumba, the clearer it becomes that she is not only a pioneer in her field but an inspiration to all people, especially women. She fought from the very beginning to enter a profession she knew she was destined to be in, regardless of the disapproval and opposition from those around her. She also broke down many barriers by becoming the first woman to occupy positions hitherto dominated by males. She has more than proven her ability and has left a legacy of work that benefits humanity as a whole.

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Georgina Theodora Wood (Ghana)

First Woman Chief Justice (Ghana)

By Maame Ama Adu-Mensah

Her Ladyship Justice (Mrs.) Georgina Theodora Wood (Rtd) (née Lutterodt) was born on June 8, 1947. Her basic education was at Bishop Girls' School, Accra, Methodist Primary School, Dodowa, and Mmofraturu Girls' Boarding School, Kumasi. She obtained her secondary education from Wesley Girls' High School, Cape Coast between 1960 and 1966. Georgina Wood attended the University of Ghana, Legon, where she earned her Bachelor of Laws degree in 1969 and was called to the Bar in 1970 after the completion of her professional training at the Ghana Law School, where she obtained a 2nd Class (Upper Division) in the Bar qualifying examinations. Wood then undertook a Police Service Officer's Training Course at the Officers College of the Ghana Police Service and commissioned as an Officer (Deputy Superintendent of Police) in 1971.

The premiere lady Chief Justice started her career as a Deputy Superintendent of Police with the Ghana Police Service in 1971 and exited in 1974. In 1974, she was appointed a Magistrate of the District Court, Grade II, and was subsequently promoted to Grade I. Wood's hard work, integrity, professionalism, and dedication to justice and the judicial system led to her rise through the ranks of the judicial system. In 1991, she was elevated to the Court of Appeal and during her tenure, she served as the President of the Court between 2000 and 2002 since she was the most senior member of the Court at the time. Subsequently, she was elevated to the Supreme Court in November 2002. In June 2007, she was appointed by His Excellency J. A. Kufuor (former president of the Republic of Ghana) as Chief Justice after a successful vetting and approval by consensus by the parliament of Ghana. She is the only Chief Justice who had the opportunity of swearing-in four presidents under the country's 4th Republican Constitution – the late President John Evans Atta-Mills in 2009, President John Dramani Mahama – initially in 2012 after the demise of Evans Atta Mills to complete his unexpired term, and subsequently in 2013 after he was declared the winner of the 2012 Presidential election, and President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in 2017.

Justice Wood is recognized as the longest-serving Chief Justice with her tenure spanning a decade, from 2007 to 2017. This period was marked by remarkable leadership and outstanding reforms in the judicial system of Ghana. She worked in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney-General and Ministry of Justice, and in collaboration with the Judicial Service, Police Service, Prisons Service, Legal Aid Commission, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and civil society groups to introduce the Justice for All Programme (JFAP) in 2007.



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The goal of the initiative was to promote access to justice and reduce overcrowding in prisons by setting up special in-prison courts throughout the country to adjudicate cases of remanded prisoners. Under Justice Wood's tenure, she diligently sustained and expanded its reach. Her efforts subsequently led to her establishment of the first High Court situated in Nsawam Prisons that promoted prisoners' rights and their access to justice. A report by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice in 2019 revealed that out of a total of 3,704 inmates who appeared before the courts, 723 had been discharged, 1,193 had been granted bail and 151 had been convicted. Justice Wood also approved the live broadcast of the Supreme Court hearings concerning the 2012 election petition case, an unprecedented decision that aided in the development of Ghana's democracy and further enlightened the populace about the electoral process. Justice Wood affirmed her promise to fight corruption in the judiciary by dismissing judges who were implicated in Tiger Eye Private Investigator's judicial expose in 2015 which uncovered corruption in Ghana's judicial system.

On her assumption of office in 2007, Chief Justice Wood (Rtd.) instituted the Annual Chief Justice's Mentoring Programme which brought together students of second cycle institutions to expose them to the functions of the judiciary and the administration of justice in Ghana. This was sponsored by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and was purposely to demystify the administration of justice while encouraging the students to take up future careers at the bar and on the bench. Later, students from the Akropong School for the Blind in the Eastern Region were included in the program. By the kind courtesy of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the scope of the Mentoring Programme was expanded to include some vulnerable migrant young girls who worked as head porters on the streets of Accra and were out of school for varied reasons.

Apart from her judicial duties in Ghana, Justice Wood served as a Sessional Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of The Gambia between 2004 and 2007, relinquishing the position after being appointed Chief Justice of Ghana. As an ardent advocate of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Wood has contributed immensely to advancing the course of ADR both locally and internationally. She was trained extensively in the United States of America and by the World Bank in ADR. Justice Wood has been instrumental in shaping the ADR structure in Ghana. She chaired the working committee which designed the court-connected ADR program and drafted manuals on court-connected ADR and pre-trials in the Commercial Court of Ghana. Her depth of knowledge in ADR led to her appointment as chairperson of the committee responsible for mainstreaming ADR in Ghanaian courts.



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Justice Wood trained judges, lawyers, and civil society organizations in ADR theory and practice at the Judicial Training Institute as well as the Judicial Service Career Magistrates Program. In addition to her contributions to ADR in Ghana, Justice Wood co-authored the manual on the Gambian ADR court-connected program and has educated members of the bench, bar, and court officials in The Gambia on the same subject matter. Besides her immense contributions to the legal academy in the field of ADR, Justice Wood taught civil procedure in the Judicial Service Career Magistrates Program and was an external examiner in Advocacy and Ethics at the Ghana School of Law for over ten years.

Throughout her career, Wood has occupied other positions. She chaired the Georgina Wood Committee, set up on July 4, 2006, to investigate the three related cases of the disappearance of 77 packets of cocaine each weighing 30 kilograms from a shipping vessel, the alleged bribery of police officers to the tune of US\$200,000.00 and the 588 kilograms of cocaine seized by officers at East Legon.

She was appointed a member of the special team of the International Bar Association (IBA) and International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) to Kenya upon the recommendation of the Kenya Law Society on Judicial Reforms. Her involvement with Kenya led to her appointment by the Kenyan government with the approval of Kenya's legislature as one of the three non-Kenyans from Commonwealth countries to serve on the Judges and Magistrates Vetting Board in 2015. The board's main function was to vet all judges and magistrates appointed before the coming into force of the 2010 Constitution to determine their suitability to continue in office. Justice Wood relinquished this position after eight months to commit more time to her role as Chief Justice of Ghana.

In 2016, Georgina's international career soared with her admission as an Honorary Benchler (honoris causa) of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, making her the first and only Ghanaian on the Historical List of Honorary Benchers since 1883. Two years after her admission, she participated in an all-female premiere event organized by Gray's Inn dubbed "First Women of the Supreme Courts in Conversation". Other members of the panel who are all honorary members of the Honourable Society of Gray's Inn were: The President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, Baroness Hale; The Chief Justice of Australia, Susan Kiefel; and Former Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin.



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As a human rights advocate, Justice Wood has served on several boards of international justice and human rights organizations, including the Global Justice Center. She was a member of the International Advisory Committee to guide the development of a handbook on HIV, the Law, and Human Rights in 2011. In the same year, she was selected to be part of a group of eminent individuals who constituted an International Advisory Group on Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care, and Support. After she retired from the Bench in 2017, she was sworn in as a member of the Council of State of Ghana per Article 89(2)(a)(i) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The Council of State is a constitutional advisory body established to give counsel to the President in the performance of his functions. On February 1, 2021, she was reappointed as a member of the Council of State by His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo to continue her mandate on the Council.

Furthermore, Wood has delivered papers and lectures on an array of topics including "Democracy, Good Governance and the role of the Legal Profession: The case of Ghana" delivered in 2009 at Hong Kong as the keynote speaker for the 16th Commonwealth Law Conference, and "Ghanaian Women and Children's access to Justice at the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice," delivered in 2010 at Cornell University in New York. In 2013, she was one of the main speakers at the first Global Deans Forum organized by the International Association of Law Schools (IALS) held in Singapore. She was later invited to serve on the Judicial Council of IALS on Global Legal Education and attended several subsequent international conferences, delivering papers when called upon. Justice Wood delivered papers at the Commonwealth Lawyers' Conferences held in Scotland and subsequently Melbourne in 2015 and 2017 respectively.

Her contribution to the legal academy is noteworthy due to her close and extensive collaboration with a few universities outside of Ghana. In 2010, Lady Justice Theodora Wood delivered a lecture on "The Development of Law and Development in Ghana" at the State University of New York College, Geneseo. She was invited as the distinguished speaker of the President's Diversity Lecture which was combined with the annual Roemer Lecture on World Affairs. This invitation initiated her engagements with Fordham University and Cornell University, Ithaca. Her engagements with Fordham Law School and its Leitner Center for International Law and Justice blossomed throughout her tenure as Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana.



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The far-reaching engagements involved study tours to the United States of America to familiarize herself with US governance and legal system, delivery of lectures at events, and networking with faculty members, jurists of the Court, and lawyers. Through the instrumentality of Justice Wood, several judges and members of the judiciary in Ghana were awarded scholarships to read post-graduate programs at Fordham Law School as well as other universities in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Malta, and The Netherlands as well as in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Her work with Professor Paolo Gallizi who represented the Leitner Center during her ten-year tenure resulted in many successes for the Ghanaian judiciary. Out of the public lectures she has given, two outstanding engagements were Justice Wood's lecture on "The Dynamic of Law and Development in Ghana: The Case for Judicial Reform in an Emergent Democracy" delivered on April 9, 2008, as part of The Leitner International Law Lecture Series and her keynote speech at the 2014 Annual Human Rights Prize and Dinner hosted by the same Center.

In addition, Justice Wood was invited as a visiting jurist at the Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution, California State University in 2011 where she delivered lectures. In 2016, she was a visiting jurist at the University of Oregon (UO), Eugene. As part of her engagement with UO, she was one of five speakers of African descent to host workshops and trainings at the university as part of the initiative of the Division of Equity and Inclusion to enhance its work. The well-planned visit extended beyond the borders of the University to include meetings with judges, the state Bar, a section of the African-American community, and a visit to the Supreme Court. In 2017, she was appointed by the Africa Initiative for Governance (AIG) as a Visiting Fellow of Practice for 2017-2018 at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. The annual AIG Fellowship is awarded to "an individual from West Africa who has demonstrated evidence of outstanding contribution to the public good, through exemplary leadership in public service."

Every good work deserves commendation, and the good work of former Chief Justice Georgina Wood has not gone unrecognized. As early as 1986, she received the Faculty of Law award for Outstanding Judicial Career at the 40th Anniversary Celebrations of the Faculty. President John A. Kufuor, the second president of the 4th Republic, decorated her with the Order of The Star Of Ghana (SOG), the nation's highest honor in 2007, and in August 2008, she was awarded a Doctor of Laws degree (LLD - honoris causa) by the University of Ghana. On retirement in 2017, Justice Wood became the first recipient of the newly instituted Legal Profession Lifetime Achievement Award by the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) for her commitment to the Rule of Law.



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In 2011, she was the recipient of the Peace Award by The Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution, California State University, Sacramento, for her commitment and contribution to ADR since receiving training in the Theory and Practice of ADR from the Centre. In the same year (2011), she received the international category award from the prestigious Trumpet Awards Foundation which recognizes African American achievement and excellence.

Undoubtedly, Georgina Theodora Wood is a trailblazer in law for her appointment as the first woman Chief Justice of Ghana and the youngest to occupy this position in modern Ghana. She has also laid a strong foundation for the judiciary of Ghana due to her niche expertise in ADR which has served nations near and far in immeasurable ways. Her visionary leadership, adoption of cutting-edge strategies to sanitize the judicial system, and commitment to women's empowerment, demonstrate her unrelenting commitment to justice.

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Grace Mumbi Ngugi (Kenya)

Disability Rights Lawyer (Kenya)

By Okoth Oluoch

The story of Grace Mumbi Ngugi cannot be narrated without any notable mention of the contextual narrative of albinos living in Kenya and Africa in general. In the heart of a small village in Banana Hill, Kiambu, the light that would illuminate the corridors of justice was switched on. As she intimates in one of her interviews, the society was very unaccommodating to a person of her color. In Thimbigua Primary School, she was, of course, a student of distinction. She excelled in her academic endeavors, attaining 35 out of 36 points in her Kenya National Primary Education (KCPE) exams. In Kenya, KCPE is the national exam that is administered to primary school students to assess their capacity to proceed to secondary educational institutions. She was the subject of ridicule and social stigma but she found solace in the support from her family of two parents and ten siblings. Her father bought her off-the-counter creams to help her avoid sunburn, which she says she suffered for most of her childhood. She tells a story of professional ignorance, where a doctor whom her mother took her to was not even aware that she needed photo-chromatic lenses. She reveals that it was even more difficult since there were not enough available materials that offered comprehensive insight on her skin condition.

Mumbi was admitted at Ng'andu Girls High School, which offered a conducive and supportive environment. It was here that she met a teacher nun, Sister Clare whom she credits for introducing her to the world of books which became her solace from the world and facilitated a better understanding of her world and the journey of self-acceptance. She is especially fond of John Ernst Steinbeck Jr., a renowned novelist who won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962 for his literary works "for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception." It is therefore not surprising that she became a writer and she cites this love for books as her inspiration to write. Her passion for writing has seen her work for respected institutions such as The Standard, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Daily Nation, The Lawyer magazine in different capacities, in her plight for social-legal issues concerning families, women, and human rights.

After high school, she received her university admission to – the University of Nairobi– one of the top tertiary institutions in Kenya to study law. She later attended the University of London School of Economics and Political Science for her graduate studies where she was awarded the Overseas Development Administration Shared Scholarship (ODASS). Ngugi has earned many awards and recognitions for her work as a judge. Her current position as a Judge of the High Court of Kenya is in itself one of the greatest achievements in the legal profession in Kenya.



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The High Courts in Kenya have the original jurisdiction to hear and determine legal matters that touch on constitutional rights.

She is the recipient of the 6th CB Madan Award Laureate. To appreciate the nature of this award, let us place it in a historical context. CB (Chunilal Bhagwandas) Madan, whom the award is named after, was a Chief Justice in Kenya from 1985 -86. His legacy of excellence in the Kenyan legal profession is what inspired the creation of the award, to appreciate excellence in the legal profession in Kenya. Lady Justice Mumbi was the recipient of the award in 2018 in honor of her outstanding commitment to constitutionalism and the rule of law in Kenya, becoming the first woman and albino judge to receive that recognition.

The difference that had now rendered her a social outcast now manifested itself in the form of a recognition presented by the current Judiciary president, Chief Justice David Maraga, who made history in the global circles for his decision to overturn the first presidential election results in democratic Africa. She received the International Commission of Jurists – Kenya: Jurist of the Year Award 2013, as a judge of the Constitutional and Human Rights Division bench in the High Court. This is an annual award that gives recognition, acknowledgment, and encouragement to jurists who have consistently, fearlessly, and impartially promoted the rule of law and human rights in Kenya during the year. She has also been accepted into the Rockefeller Bellagio Centre Practitioner's Residency which consists of cross-sectoral professionals such as journalists, senior policymakers, and players in both private and public advocacy, with at least ten years of professional experience, to assist the Rockefeller Foundation in promoting the well-being of the humanity. The application criteria seek experienced professionals to provide insight from work experience.

The biggest contribution to the law has been her particular indispensable role to post-2010 Constitution jurisprudence during her tenure as one of the inaugural members of the benches of the Constitutional and Human Rights Division of the High Court alongside Justice David Majanja and Justice Isaac Lenaola (now a Supreme Court judge). This rendered her the first woman, albino judge to grace that bench after the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution. Regarding the principle of presumption of constitutionality of legislation, Kenyan courts have generally invoked this principle to justify the constitutionality of a legislative pronouncement- a situation which Khobe considers a failure of the courts to subject the legislature to meticulous judicial scrutiny.



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Ngugi J's decision to deviate from that norm in *Anthony Njenga Mbuti & 5 Others v Attorney General & 3 Others*, restricting its application in the Kenyan context to pre-2010 constitution statutory enactments. Additionally, her stance on cases involving corruption and abuse of office by public officers, especially the elected representatives represents a clear determination to use her position to ensure better delivery of public services in Kenya.

At a time when corruption has been cited as a menace to national development in Kenya, Justice Ngugi's decision could not have come at a better time. Her judgment to uphold a trial court decision to bar public officers accused of abuse of office and fiscal incompetence initiated an unprecedented jurisprudence in dealing with allegations directed towards public officers in exercising their official mandates. For example, in *Moses Kasaine Lenolkul v Director of Public Prosecutions*, Ngugi J poses a very important question of public interest, "Would it serve the public interest for him to go back to office and preside over the finances of the county that he has been charged with embezzling from?" This question summarizes Ngugi J's concern for the common mwananchi plight and her determination to fight the menace of corruption in the country.

In upholding her decision, the Court of Appeal stated that the bar was very necessary to ensure proper enforcement of the court's orders and avoid evidence tampering and witness interferences. She has also extended her indispensable legal expertise in the adjudication of several human rights litigations. These judicial decisions include the declaration that children born outside marriage to enjoy the liberty of having their names of their fathers entered in the birth register, on the jurisdictional capacity of High Courts to hear and determine matters of violation of rights and fundamental freedoms, just to mention a few. A number of these decisions have rendered some legislative provisions unconstitutional to ensure effective administration of justice. She is also the co-founder of, Albinism Foundation for East Africa, a charitable trust institution that offers facilitative services to albinos in East Africa such as advocacy to improve their lives.



Grace Mumbi Ngugi (Kenya)

Disability Rights Lawyer (Kenya)

By Okoth Oluoch

Justice Ngugi's story of the rise to the upper echelons of legal corridors defines a journey of defiance and fortitude to pursue excellence against all odds, a 'story of resilience and fortitude.' From her early days as a 'different' child living at the mercy of a medical condition that predisposes her to both social stigma and threat of early demise, it has been a journey worth chronicling, which sways my inclination to write her story. She has defied the societal perspective on normalcy, considering that albinism is still shunned upon in African societies and they are normally rendered as outcasts. Most importantly, her inspirational status is seen in the number of young albinos who are inspired to excel professionally and socially, through her story amidst all the hurdles they face because of their condition. A good example is Ms. Monica Muchiri, who cites Lady Justice Mumbi as her role model in her aspiration to become the first albino television news anchor.

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Hairat Aderinsola Balogun, OON (Nigeria)

Life Bencher (Nigeria)

By Yusuf Lawal Esq.

“A woman of many firsts!” There is no better appellation to describe the Honorable Hairat Aderinsola Balogun OON, Life Bencher, and the Founder of Libra Law Office. She is an accomplished legal practitioner with an inspiring and fulfilling professional career. Hairat Aderinsola Balogun (Nee Alatishe) has left an indelible mark on the legal profession in Nigeria. Hairat Aderinsola Balogun was born on October 10, 1941, in Lagos, Nigeria, to the family of Alatishe of the Badewa Family of Ososa, Ogun State. She is the first child of her mother, who was the fourth wife to her father who had nine wives. Precisely ten days after her birth, she was placed in the care of her grandmother who raised her in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State.

Hairat Balogun received her early education in Ijebu-Ode; Saint Saviour’s Primary School, Ijebu-Ode, and Christ Church Porogun Primary School, Ijebu Ode where she earned her First School Leaving Certificate. At the age of twelve, she traveled to the United Kingdom for her Secondary School Education, attending Mount School London from 1955-1960. During a visit to Nigeria during school break, Hairat Balogun accompanied a family friend, Mr. Dayo Sonuga to the traffic court in Yaba, Lagos, and was later inspired to pursue a profession in law with the desire to serve as an aid to the people of Nigeria. She proceeded to study law at Gibson and Weldon, as well as the Inns of Court School of Law-Lincoln’s Inn. She was called to the English Bar on February 5, 1963, at the Lincoln’s Inn. She later returned to Nigeria and enrolled in the Nigerian Law School Lagos from April to July 1963, gaining admission to the Nigerian Bar on July 13, 1963.

Hairat Balogun has had a very fulfilling professional life. From 1971 to 1972 she was appointed as an Assistant Director, at the Legal Aid Council. She also served as the Secretary of the Sixth Commonwealth Law Conference from November 1978-August 1980. In August of 1980, in a keenly contested Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) national general election, Hairat Balogun was elected as the General Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association, making her the first woman to be elected to this position, a position she held for three years. Balogun later became the first Nigerian woman to become a member of the Council of the International Bar Association, serving from 1981-1983, 1992-1994, and 1994-1996.

Hairat Balogun volunteered and taught pro bono at the Nigerian Law School from January 1979 to July 1984, teaching Law Office Management and Professional Ethics, and established an annual prize award in the Nigerian Law School for Special/Handicapped Students who performed exceptionally at the final exams.



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She further oversaw the compilation and publication of Laws of Lagos State for the period of 1975-1981 and undertook the translation of two edicts from the English language to the Yoruba language—The Environmental Sanitation Edict, 1984 and the Illegal Markets (Prohibition) Edict, 1984. She saw to the creation of two new Divisions; Commercial Law and Law Reform in the Ministry of Justice and ensured the inauguration of prison visits and the holding of sessions by the State Advisory Council on the prerogative of mercy in the prison yards at Apapa, Kirikiri, the maximum and women's prisons.

Hairat Balogun's remarkable achievements in the legal profession, both domestically and internationally ultimately led to her appointment as the Attorney General of Lagos State on January 14, 1984. This feat would make her the first female Attorney General of Lagos State, and the second woman Attorney General in the country during the military regime of Governor Gbolahan Mudasiru. Such a remarkable achievement without a doubt paved the way for other women to be subsequently appointed as Attorneys General of their states. As Attorney General of Lagos State, she unified the positions of the Permanent Secretary and the Solicitor General, fusing the powers which were in the past exercised by two people, thereby doing away with duplication of functions and allowing for a more efficient decision-making process. In 1981, Hairat Balogun was nominated as a Bencher to the Body of Benchers, the highest and the most distinguished body in the legal profession in Nigeria. Later in 1989, she made history as the first woman to be made a Life Bencher. She went on to become the Chairperson of the Body of Benchers between 1998 to 1999 and the first woman to be appointed to the position in the history of Nigeria.

Hairat Balogun acted as Chairperson of the State Tenders Board at various times between 1984 to 1986 and as the Chairperson of the Lagos State Transport Corporation from 1984 to 1985. Between 1984 and 1986, she recommended ten legal practitioners for appointment as High Court Judges. She initiated the Weekly Consultation/Conference session for Counsel in the Civil Litigation and Director of Public Prosecution Divisions. She co-founded the Continuing Legal Education Association of Nigeria (CLEAN). She was a Council member until it was passed over to the Nigeria Bar Association. Hairat Balogun served as a member of the Governing Council of Lagos State University Council (LASU) 1987-1990, and a member of the Management Board, Center for Cultural Services, University of Lagos, 1987-1990. Hairat Balogun was appointed a member of the Transition to Civil Rule Tribunal between 1987-1989 by the Gbadamosi Babangida Military administration in a bid to return the nation to civilian rule from 1992.



Hairat Aderinsola Balogun, OON (Nigeria)

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By Yusuf Lawal Esq.

Between 1993 and 2001, she served as a Legal Assessor for the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) upon her appointment by the Chief Justice of Nigeria. Her duties included rendering advice at the sittings of the ICAN Disciplinary Committee. She voluntarily resigned to spend more time on other national assignments. As a member of the International Bar Association (IBA), she served the section on General Practice of the International Bar Association from 1990-1994 and, at various times, a member of the Nomination Committee of the Election of Officers. She was Chairperson of the Working Group on Gender Issues of the IBA from 1990-1994, and a Founding member of the Council of the Human Rights Institute of the International Bar Association for five years.

In September 2000, Hairat Balogun was nominated by President Obasanjo and approved by the Senate as a Member of the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission, where she served from February 2001 to April 2002, when she resigned voluntarily to return to legal practice. The Rotary International (District 9110 Nigeria) later honored her with an award for the most Distinguished Vocational Service for High Ethics in May 2002.

Hairat Balogun served as a United Nations International Observer at the Lockerbie Trial from 2000 to 2001 where she observed the day-to-day proceedings of the Court. That same year, she served as Honorable Member of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offenses Committee. Hairat Balogun would later become the first female member and the first female President of the Rotary Club of Lagos which she served meritoriously from 2012 to 2013.

Hairat Balogun is a Life Member of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) for her dedication to breaking boundaries and encouraging women to aspire to be whatever they want to be in life. In recognition of her service and steadfast dedication to the legal profession and the nation as a whole, Hairat Balogun was conferred with the highest national honor in Nigeria—Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) on February 14, 2008.



Hairat Aderinsola Balogun, OON (Nigeria)

Life Bencher (Nigeria)

By Yusuf Lawal Esq.

In 2009, she authored 'Women in Law', a book that examined the role of gender difference in the legal profession which was an attempt to chronicle the efforts of the first women doing remarkable work in the legal profession and beyond. In a bid to chronicle and document all her achievements and setting all records straight, she published 'To Serve in Truth & Justice: Law Memoirs' in 2010, which was published by Habiba Balogun Consulting Firm on behalf of Libra Law Office. In 'To Serve in Truth & Justice: Law Memoirs' (pg 151), she remarks, "it is often asked how do you want to be remembered? My answer to that question is "she did her best for the legal profession" because that's all I strive for each and every day knowing that I only have today to do what must be done."

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Ifeoma Enemo, Ph.D. (Nigeria)

First Woman Dean, Faculty of Law, Enugu Campus (Nigeria)

By Chisa Onyejekwe

Ifeoma Enemo was born in Umuahia Abia State (southeast Nigeria) on 29th January 1959, into a legal family where her father and aunt were lawyers, and four out of her five siblings are lawyers. Her father was a barrister while her mother was an educationist. Her paternal aunt Mrs. Phoebe Chiadikaobi Ajayi-Obe Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), is the 1st female SAN of Igbo ethnicity. The great attributes of her father and aunt attracted and set the foundation for her legal career.

Enemo's primary education was at the All Saints Cathedral Primary School, Onitsha, and finished in 1970. Her secondary school education was at Queen's School, Enugu, from 1971 to 1975. Professor Enemo's legal career started by studying law in the first and oldest indigenous University in Nigeria, the University of Nigeria. She graduated in 1980, and immediately proceeded to the Nigerian Law School, in Lagos. From the law school, she obtained her Barrister at Law (BL) certificate and was called to the Bar as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 1981. After the one-year mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) with the Nigerian Air Force, Lagos in 1982, Enemo worked in her father's Law Chambers at Onitsha before proceeding to the prestigious University of Lagos where she obtained her Master of Laws Degree (LL.M), in 1984. She further obtained a Doctorate Degree (Ph.D.) in International Law from the University of Nigeria where she was awarded the prize for the Best Graduating Postgraduate of the Faculty of Law, for the 1995/96 academic session.

In 1985, Enemo joined the services of the University of Nigeria, as an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of International Law and Jurisprudence of the Faculty of Law. She steadily progressed to her present rank of Professor of International Law. She held the positions of Acting/Substantive Head of Department of International Law and Jurisprudence, Associate Dean of Faculty of Law, and Dean of Faculty of Law. Her research and publication interests are in various aspects of International Law, Conflict Management and Resolution, Family Law, Women and Children's Rights, and Climate Change. She has published many articles in reputable journals and written two books. Her Inaugural Lecture titled, "Dangerous Families in Nigerian Law: A National Albatross?" was the first by her Department and was delivered in 2014.

In 2007, she was appointed the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Law and thereafter was promoted to Professor and became full Dean of the Faculty. As an active member of the Faculty and its first female Dean since its establishment in 1960, she had a great task and challenge ahead. One of these great challenges was getting the Faculty accredited.



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Earlier in 2010, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) accredited the Faculty of Law, which was critical to its continued existence. That critical period was a huge challenge ensuring that the Faculty was successful in order to regain its lost glory, and reputation as the first law faculty and save the entire University from embarrassment.

In 2005, the Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, lost NUC accreditation and as a result, the Council of Legal Education reduced the quota of students from over 300 to 180. The implication was that the University could not admit first-year students into the Faculty that academic session and beyond until the accreditation was restored. The adverse consequences of this outcome to the University of Nigeria were huge. It was the topic of discussion at major gatherings and was very embarrassing and painful to both staff and students of the Faculty of Law. This made the administration take urgent and necessary steps to ensure that accreditation was restored. Thus in 2007, the Faculty faced another NUC accreditation and this time the Faculty was given a reprieve with an interim accreditation. This was short-lived as another accreditation was looming in 2010 but this failure to gain full accreditation resulted in the closure of the Faculty according to NUC regulations.

It was during these turbulent times that the first woman was at the helm of the Faculty since its inception in 1965. This was one of the major challenges Enemo faced as the new Dean, in a field still male-dominated. With grossly inadequate infrastructural facilities, a major lack of funds, a lack of staff and only one professor in the faculty, inadequate library holdings and internet facilities, no faculty vehicles, amongst other deficiencies it was not an easy task for her to overcome. Understandably, she was scared and nervous considering that the Faculty already had a serious accreditation issue. However, she was determined that the faculty would not fail under her watch.

To achieve this, she realized that it must be a team effort and every member of the faculty had to be involved to achieve accreditation. One of the things they agreed on was to host a homecoming celebration and utilising all professional and personal relationships to achieve their goal. Students, alumni, and university administration were not left out. Committees were tasked with specific assignments to cover all vital areas for the accreditation.



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Members of the Committee that would oversee the Alumni Homecoming were carefully selected because the committee was strategic for fundraising, as there was a need for funds to meet the accreditation requirements. The committees pursued their assignments aggressively, especially the fundraising and contact committees. They reached out to all alumni and alumnae and, to their amazement, the ones contacted reached out to others located outside the country, pleading that their Alma Mater that nurtured them must not be allowed to die—the strategy worked. The Homecoming was a huge success as the alumni/alumnae response to the plea was amazing. From the proceeds of the event and further donations thereafter, the faculty was able to show a visible turnaround.

As Dean of Law, Enemo achieved a lot which includes but is not limited to the following:

- i. Introduction of the Clinical Legal Education and a Legal Clinic run by the Faculty to provide legal aid for students and people of Enugu.
- ii. Created a website for the Faculty.
- iii. Infrastructural turn around; a massive Mary Odili Moot Court/ Multi-Purpose Hall with staff offices.
- iv. Renovation of the Coscharis Lecture Theatre with many classrooms.
- v. Negotiated and received approval for a magnificent faculty building to be built by TET Fund.
- vi. Up to date Law library holding with internet facilities.
- vii. Staff welfare: promotion of staff and employing young and fresh academics without bias, adequate staffing; faculty vehicles amongst others

In June 2015, when the NUC accreditation team arrived, they were impressed with the progress and granted full accreditation to the faculty. From the words of her staff, this was only possible through transparency and accountability under the leadership of Enemo. “As Dean of Law, she turned around the Faculty, inspired hope to staff who were facing job loss with a failed accreditation. She led the Faculty with integrity and dignity. As an academic, Enemo was firm and possessed excellent skills at passing across information to students. Her mentoring mirrored the value of hard work and strength of the woman figure in academia”. (Handover notes, 2015).



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She instilled in her staff/colleagues never to leave anything to chance, but to always work together with focus and commitment and that good leadership irrespective of one's gender will result in success. Consequently, leadership qualities which include amongst other things, clarity of vision and mission, transparency and accountability, team spirit, strength, hard work, commitment, and dedication are the prerequisites for anybody who desires the successful accomplishment of any task. Besides her role as Dean in academia, Enemo contributed to not only the profession and law but society at large. At the University of Nigeria-Nsukka, (UNN), she has served as a member or Chairperson of several University/Faculty Committees and sub-committees including the Senate and Governing Council of the University. Beyond this, she renders services to other faculties of law in various universities as an external assessor and examiner at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She contributed further to the development of the nation by services to some government parastatals, such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), where she served as a member of the Board and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund). She also served as a member of the Council of Legal Education of the Nigerian Law School.

Enemo was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, from 2011-2016. She is an alumna of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru Jos; and Galilee International Management Institute (GIMI) Israel. A practicing Christian, she is presently the Deputy Chancellor, Diocese of Nsukka, Anglican Communion and Chairman, Chapel of Redemption in Enugu Campus of the University.

Culturally, she is active in women's meetings and organizations in the village where she has successfully mentored women towards either successful academic or business ventures leading to her being honored in her village (Okija) by an association of graduates. Her achievements will be chronicled in the 100 Anambra Achievers commemoration of International Achievers Day in Onitsha Anambra State Nigeria in March 2020.



Ifeoma Enemo, Ph.D. (Nigeria)

First Woman Dean, Faculty of Law, Enugu Campus (Nigeria)

By Chisa Onyejekwe

Breaking into a role that has been traditionally occupied by men in a patriarchal region of Nigeria, Enemo through her role set the pace for other female academics to become Deans of Law in universities in southeast Nigeria. She exemplified the possibility that women can be mothers, wives and have a successful career building up other women. Enemo has inspired many young women both academically and personally.

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Irene Mambilima (Zambia)

First Woman Chief Justice (Zambia)

By Janet Ilunga

On February 26, 2015, Justice Irene Mambilima became the first woman Chief Justice of the Republic of Zambia, having served earlier as the country's first female Deputy Chief Justice from 2008-2015. Mambilima was born on March 31, 1952, in Chiwoko village, located in the Eastern province of Zambia, the first of five children. Her father, Kezias Chirwa, was a bricklayer and her mother, Nelia Ngulube, was a full-time housewife. Mambilima is married to Joseph Mambilima, a retired Major in the Airforce. Mambilima is also a mother of five and a proud grandmother of ten.

Justice Mambilima was raised in Matero, a township in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Matero is often known as "A City within a City", comprised of mostly low-income groups. Mambilima's upbringing among the poorest of the country in Matero is what ignited her desire for justice, leading her to a career in the legal profession. Mambilima went to Chingwele Primary School in Matero and then from 1967 to 1971 she attended Matero Girls High School for her Secondary School education. In 1972, she enrolled for a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degree at the University of Zambia, where she graduated with merit in 1976. Thereafter, she obtained a Master of Laws (LL.M.) degree with merit from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 1977.

In 1977, Mambilima proceeded to the Law Practice Institute (now known as the Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education) and obtained her practicing certificate as an advocate. While at the Law Practice Institute, she joined the Department of Civil Service Training as a learner legal practitioner. During this period, Mambilima worked at the Legal Affairs Ministry as well as at the Lands and Deeds Registry. She also worked at the Legal Aid Department (now known as the Legal Aid Board), which she later led.

Since her admission to the bar in 1977, Justice Mambilima has served in various government capacities. As a determined and hardworking legal practitioner, she was immediately recruited as a State Advocate in the Attorney General's Chambers and rose through the ranks to Senior State Advocate. During this time, she also served in the international agreements department for four years (1980 – 1984). This position allowed her to advise the Government on loans and bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as represent the Republic of Zambia as an alternate delegate at the United Nations General Assembly. After only seven years practicing the law, Mambilima proved herself and took the mantle as Director of the Legal Aid Board, serving as its first female Director. As director, she helped vulnerable individuals in society obtain pro bono legal advice and access to justice.



Irene Mambilima (Zambia)

First Woman Chief Justice (Zambia)

By Janet Ilunga

In December 1985, Mambilima joined the Judiciary of Zambia as High Court Commissioner before becoming a Puisne Judge only three years later. During her tenure as Judge-in-Charge of the High Court, Justice Mambilima spearheaded the review of the civil procedure rules and the re-introduction of court-annexed mediation. She also chaired an ad hoc Committee that proposed far-reaching structural changes to the Zambian Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Investigations.

After serving as Puisne Judge and as High Court Judge-in-Charge between 1989 and 1996, Mambilima was then elevated to the Supreme Court bench in 2002. She served the nation as Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) from August 2005 to March 2008, then ascended to the office of Deputy Chief Justice in 2008. As ECZ Chairperson, Justice Mambilima presided over the 2006 presidential and parliamentary general elections, the 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections, and the 2015 presidential election. She has also participated in election observer missions in Mozambique, Kenya, and Seychelles and has led the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) Election Observation Mission to the presidential elections in Liberia. Justice Mambilima served a second term at the helm of the Commission from 2011 to 2015 when she was then appointed Chief Justice of the Republic of Zambia.

Justice Mambilima has been a sought-after speaker at different judicial and electoral seminars and conferences, at which she has presented papers on election management, alternative dispute resolution, gender, and democracy, among others. She is a member of several professional associations, among them the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), the Zambia Association of Women Judges, the Council of Law Reporting, and Child Fund Zambia. She is also a prominent member of the regional organization Southern African Chief Justices' Forum (SACJF) comprised of sixteen member states that concentrate on promoting democracy and the rule of law.

Mambilima has received various recognitions for her accomplishments. In 2019, the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) recognized Chief Justice Mambilima for her presentation on "Scaling Access to Justice through Technology" at the World Bank's Law, Justice, and Development week. One of Justice Mambilima's greatest passions is equal access to justice.



Irene Mambilima (Zambia)

First Woman Chief Justice (Zambia)

By Janet Ilunga

Because she was raised by parents who believed in equal opportunities for their children, Justice Mambilima has made access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized groups her number one priority. Therefore, it came as no surprise that among her first tasks as Chief Justice, she launched the first fast-track courts dedicated to hearing gender-based violence (GBV) cases. The courts, which exist in six provinces in Zambia, have helped tremendously to raise awareness, boost confidence in women and girls to report cases of GBV, and successfully prosecute GBV cases. The number of GBV cases reported nearly doubled from 14,097 in 2013 to 22,073 in 2018, while cases withdrawn from court reduced significantly.

Justice Mambilima's determination to achieve gender parity has been the hallmark of her leadership. Since ascending to the helm of the judiciary, Justice Mambilima has achieved 52% gender parity on the bench in the superior courts. In her own words:

"We are not there yet, but great strides are being made to narrow the gap...slowly but surely, we shall attain the optimum numbers, especially that females account for 52.3 per cent of the working population compared to males at 47.7 percent."

To this end, Justice Mambilima actively participates in activities aimed at finding ways to alleviate poverty and increase access to justice. She is a firm believer that only when people are conscious of their rights can they come to court to assert those rights. Her message to women and girls that the key to empowerment is education has been consistent.

"Women are the most vulnerable...the highest levels of poverty are among women. The rate of literacy is lowest among the women. Women do not have resources to litigate and often do not know their rights . . . Women must be educated so that they can assert themselves."

The impact of Justice Mambilima's service and contribution to the development of law in Zambia has been enormous. As a trailblazer for many women and girls who aspire to reach positions of leadership, Chief Justice Mambilima epitomizes the spirit of hard work and humility, tempered with a sense of justice. For Justice Mambilima, access to justice can take different forms. She feels that the courts must be taken closer to the people, especially to rural and peri-urban areas, where low-income people reside and where courts are largely absent. She has also consistently advocated for the simplification of court procedures and that both adjudicators and support staff be more approachable.



Irene Mambilima (Zambia)

First Woman Chief Justice (Zambia)

By Janet Ilunga

"The procedures and evidential rules must be simplified or user-friendly to the litigants as this would go a long way in encouraging the general population, including women, to access the justice system. As it is, even an average enlightened person generally finds the court environment intimidating."

Away from the bench, Justice Mambilima has also educated women in her local church on issues related to property and land rights. She has a deep conviction that education can open doors for many young people like it did for her. Mambilima appreciates that both men and women are the nation's greatest asset and that if both are allowed to exploit their full potential, then they can contribute to national development.

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Jacqueline Lohoues-Oble, Ph.D. (Côte D'Ivoire)

First Woman Professor in Private Law

By Papa Thierno Ndoye

Jacqueline Oble, (nee Lohoues-), is an Ivorian lawyer and politician, born in 1950 in Dabou (Côte d'Ivoire), a town located a few miles away from Abidjan. Born into a family of eleven children, Jacqueline Oble is the first female candidate to run for President in the history of Cote d'Ivoire. A widow, a mother of four daughters, and grandmother of two granddaughters, Lohoues-Oble started her primary education at the Notre Dame of the Apostles school of Dabou and proceeded to Bingerville, where she passed her Ordinary (O)Level Certificate (BEPC). She proceeded to Bouaké Girls' College and later joined the University of Abidjan to study Law.

In 1975, Jacqueline Oble obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of Abidjan Law School. She subsequently attended the University of Paris II, where she completed her master's degree in Private Law in 1977. She defended her thesis in 1982 at the University of Jean Moulin, Lyon III with first-class honors. Dr. Lohoues-Oble is considered the first female in Francophone Sub - Saharan Africa to pass the Private Law examinations "aggregation competition" organized by the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) in 1983.

With regards to her professional career, Jacqueline Oble wears two hats: she is a female legal scholar and a politician. At the aforementioned university, she demonstrated her passion for teaching and research. After her "aggregation", she became a senior lecturer at the Training and Research Unit for Administrative, Political and Legal Sciences at the Cocody Campus of the University in Abidjan. Subsequently, she became the Dean of the Faculty of Law and a tenured Professor in 1987. Prof. Lohoues-Oble is also head of the Abidjan Consulting Firm and Legal Affairs (CCEJ). In February 2008, Prof. Lohoues-Oble became arbitrator and President of the Court of Arbitration at the Joint Court of Justice and Arbitration (CCJA) of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA).

She has also been an active member of a host of institutions and associations. These include the International Academy of Comparative Law, the African Academy of Sciences, Arts, Cultures, and Diasporas (ASCAD) in July 2004; the Foundation for the Protection of Nature; Foundation for Continental Law Initiative, the Regional Insurance Control Commission (CRCA), the Inter-African Conference of Markets Insurance (CIMA), the Regional Expert Commission of the Francophonie University Agency (CRE-AUF), member of the Advisory Committee of the African Law Institute (IAD).



Jacqueline Lohoues-Oble, Ph.D. (Côte D'Ivoire)

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Jacqueline Oble is a former member of the International Institute of Legal Scholars(using French as the medium of communication) (IDEF); former President of the Ivorian section of the Henri CAPITANT Association of the Friends of French Legal Practices and former member of the Council of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO).

As Dean and co-founder of the Private University Faculties of Abidjan (FUPA), Jacqueline Oble was also a Professor in the Department of the National School of Administration (ENA) in Abidjan between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. From 1994 to 2009, she was a guest lecturer in many foreign universities, chaired various doctoral committees, or invited as a committee member. Jacqueline Oble's first steps in politics began in 1984 at a conference on the expansion of family law in Africa, through which President Omar BONGO (former President of Gabon) noticed and mentioned her to President Felix Houphouet Boigny, who in turn invited her to work within his government. Jacqueline Oble subsequently joined the government led by Alassane Ouattara. She was therefore appointed Minister of Justice from 1990 to 1993 and returned to teaching after the death of President Boigny. She co-founded in 1994 the Liberal Party of Côte d'Ivoire, Le Rassemblement des Republicains (RDR), was elected Representative of Abobo to the National Assembly in 1995 until her resignation in 1999.

In 2005, Lohoues-Oble became the only woman on the list of the sixteen -member-cabinet of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. From February 2006 to March 2007, she was appointed Senior Legal Adviser to Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, in charge of the coordination of crisis management. In April 2006, she chaired the Scientific Committee Conference of Grand-Bassam on "social cohesion" organized by both UNDP and the Ivorian Government and also chaired the Steering Committee for the organization of the "Forum on National Dialogue" resulting from the UN Resolution 1633 between May and September 2006.

It is as a result of heading the Association of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians and as a founding member of the Association of Women Lawyers that Lohoues-Oble embarked in 2010 on the electoral adventure to become President of Côte d'Ivoire. The place of women, youth, employment, the modernization of justice, and the revamping of the health and education sectors prominently featured on her political agenda. With only 0.27% of the votes of the electorate, she threw her support in the second round behind President Laurent Gbagbo, who later appointed her as spokesperson and Minister of Education from December 5, 2010, to April 11, 2011.



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Following the refusal of the international community to recognize the government of Guilbert Ake, Lohoues-Oble strongly condemned the invasion of Côte d'Ivoire by French and United Nations-led troops, calling it a serious breach and disregard for Ivorian institutions. After the arrest of President Gbagbo on April 11, 2011, Lohoues-Oble returned to teaching at the Cocody Campus. Subsequently, in 2013 she became a member of the Scientific Council of the International Union of Judicial Officers. Concerning her contributions to the legal field, Jacqueline Lohoues-Oble is known to be highly prolific in her contribution to several scholarly works towards stimulating the consolidation of the Rule of Law. Similarly, she played a significant role in improving Ivorian family law; and women and children's rights. Lohoues-Oble participated in numerous conferences and seminars on African Community law, Insurance Law, Business Law, Constitutional Law, Environmental Law, and Urban Planning law.

As we underscore her contribution to the resolution of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, it is equally essential to note that Oble is a brilliant lawyer, as showcased in her prestigious publications, especially her input to OHADA. She was made head of mission for its prospective study on the progress and financing of the said organization between May and August 2002. Already in 1996, her credentials in jurisprudence won her a consultancy with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). She shared the same perspectives with the African Development Bank (AfDB) on issues of good governance, legal and judicial reforms in Cameroon, Madagascar, and Djibouti from 2000 to 2002. In the same vein, she drafted the Bill on Sexual and Reproductive Health: Phase 1 & 2 (World Bank, Ministry of Health of Côte d'Ivoire August 2004) and distinguished herself as a member of the committee reviewing the UEMOA-BCEAO draft texts of January 2004.

Furthermore, in the context of her consulting services, Lohoues-Oble supervised the publication of the book "The Reproductive Health Laws and Policies in French-speaking Africa" spearheaded by the Centre for Reproductive Health Law and Policy (CRLP) and for the analysis of Côte d'Ivoire's rules and regulations on environmental protection, biodiversity, resource genetics, and property on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in March 1999. She also consulted with the Central Bank of West Africa (BCEAO) in 1996 on the draft convention establishing the Regional Council for Public Savings and Financial Markets; In 1994, Lohoues-Oble issued a legal opinion on the effects of the devaluation of the CFA franc; and another on the legality of the Board's decision to amend loan agreements and advances given to AfDB staff.



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All in all, the intellectual brilliance of Lohoues-Oble, her high level of professionalism, her outstanding contributions in shaping the law in Côte d'Ivoire, Africa, and globally have earned her honorary titles such as the Knight in the Order of the Academic Palms of the French Republic, Commander in the Order of National Education of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and Officer in the National Order of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. Although retired, Professor Lohoues-Oble continues to serve as an Advisor to the Constitutional Council of Mali, having won the admiration of then President, Mamadou Koné, who once hailed her as an Iron Lady in Africa, and a true "model of success for all women."

Her commitment to improving the living conditions of the people of Côte d'Ivoire, especially the issue of inheritance that poses a problem in the country, justified the publication of her book entitled Ivorian inheritance law, a study that draws on her thesis: Inheritance law in Côte d'Ivoire: Tradition and Modernism".

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Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo (Ghana)

First Woman Supreme Court Judge

By Christine Selikem Lassey

Justice Joyce Adeline Bamford-Addo is a retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Ghana and a former Speaker of Ghana's Parliament. Bamford-Addo was born in Ghana on the 26th of March 1937. Her father was English and her mother hailed from Aburi in the Eastern region of Ghana. Bamford-Addo attained her primary education at St. Mary's Boarding School and OLA Boarding School. She then proceeded to the Holy Child School in Cape Coast for her secondary education. Bamford-Addo joined the Inner Temple in the United Kingdom and received legal training at the Inns of Court. She was called to the English Bar in 1961 and the Ghana Bar in 1962.

Bamford-Addo began her professional career at the Attorney General's Department in 1963 as an Assistant State Attorney. She steadily progressed and was promoted to State Attorney, and later Principal State Attorney of Ghana. She continued to make giant strides in the judicial and became Chief State Attorney in 1973, and finally the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1976.

Bamford-Addo contributed her rich experience and expertise to the drafting of the 1992 constitution of Ghana. During the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) tenure, she served as the second-deputy Speaker of the consultative assembly that drafted the 1992 constitution. After more than a decade in judicial service, Bamford-Addo took her first bow on the bench as a Justice of the Supreme Court in 1991. Her appointment was unprecedented as she was the first female Justice to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Ghana. Successive Presidents followed this precedent, by appointing women to the Supreme Court, which was a win for women empowerment advocates. At the dawn of the fourth republic, Bamford-Addo delivered seminal judgments that shaped Ghana's constitutional jurisprudence.

In *New Patriotic Party v Attorney-General* (1996-97) SC GLR 729, Bamford-Addo affirmed that both natural and legal persons had locus standi to institute an action to challenge any act or laws that were inconsistent with the 1992 constitution of Ghana. This judgment equipped a wider range of persons with the capacity to defend and uphold the constitution.

Bamford-Addo is a firm believer in the rule of law and the enforcement of all persons' fundamental human rights. In the *New Patriotic Party* case, she struck down section 4(1) of the Council of Indigenous Business Associations Law 1993 (PNDCL 312), which compelled the organizations listed therein to register with the council, as unconstitutional. She opined that section 4(1) infringed on the rights of freedom of association as enshrined in article 21(1)(e) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana because it negated choice and voluntariness.



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Bamford-Addo voluntarily retired as a justice of the Supreme Court in October 2004. It has been alleged that she retired because President John Agyekum Kufuor bypassed her for the Chief Justice appointment and instead appointed her junior Justice George Kingsley Acquah. Bamford-Addo veered into another arm of government after her retirement. She was elected as the Speaker of the Fourth Republic of Ghana after the 2018 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ghana. This remarkable feat was crowned with the accolade of being the first female to be appointed as Speaker of Ghana's Parliament and in the West African sub-region.

During her active years in the profession, Bamford-Addo was also a member of prestigious associations such as the Ghana Bar Association, International Federation of Women Lawyers, the legal aid board, the General Legal Council's judicial council, and the Catholic Lawyers Association. In recognition of her remarkable service to Ghana, Bamford-Addo was honored by the late President Evans Atta Mills in October 2011 with the Companion of the Order of Volta award, the highest achievement in the Order of Volta awards.

Bamford-Addo pierced the notional veil that separated women from high offices such as the Supreme Court and the position of Speaker of Parliament. Her remarkable achievements paved the way for a new dawn of women justices in Ghana's Supreme Court. She is a pacesetter in both the judiciary and the legislature.

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