

**Launch of the Association of Black Judges
at the Supreme Court**

1 July 2025

Welcoming remarks

Lord Leggatt

Welcome to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. I know I speak for all the Justices and the executive team when I say how delighted we are to be able to make the court available for the launch this evening of the new UK Association of Black Judges.

My name is George Leggatt, I am one of the Justices, and I am very pleased to be attending this event. Vicky Fox, the Court's Chief Executive, is here too. And I am not the only Justice present. Lady Simler, Lord Lloyd Jones, Lord Stephens, Lord Sales and Lord Richards are all here with us too. And also none other than Baroness Hale, the Court's former President. She is one, I think, of 3 Baronesses present. You will be hearing shortly from another, the Lady Chief Justice, Baroness Sue Carr.

You have a full programme and I do not want to detain you. But I do just want to take a moment to say that we are, in the Supreme Court, acutely aware of the under-representation of black lawyers in the judiciary, and indeed in the wider legal profession. I say that, not just because I have no black colleague, but because we are well aware of the statistics which show that, although the diversity generally of the judiciary and of the legal profession has been improving very gradually over recent years, that has not been true for black lawyers. It is a shameful state of affairs.

We have had our awareness raised by an organisation that I am sure is known to some of you called the Black Talent Charter. Its mission is to achieve equitable representation of black talent in business and the professions. In June 2023, the Supreme Court became a signatory of the Charter. Their team support the Court administration here, offering their expertise and providing a framework by which to measure progress.

We have had a special meeting of all the Justices of the Court at which the Chair of the Black Talent Charter, Harry Matovu KC, and the chief executive, Laura Durrant, came to speak to us about under-representation of black lawyers and what we might do to support their organisation and its aims.

That led to an event held here that we jointly organised with them for black lawyers, aimed particularly at lawyers in mid-career. It was very well attended, both in person and online. Perhaps someone present this evening was there. We had a panel discussion on the theme of tackling barriers and creating pathways to career development. That is clearly a theme also of vital importance for black judges. Because, as I know and we will no doubt be hearing, the difficulties and obstacles are not just to entry, but to progression in a legal or judicial career.

This is not the time to talk about this Court's activities. But I must mention one other initiative in which we participate – both because of what it means to me and because I am delighted that the third Baroness here this evening is Baroness Lawrence. The Stephen Lawrence scholarships, if you do not know about them, are a fantastic scheme, supported by Freshfields, designed to address the under-representation of young black men in City law firms. Each year a talented group of law students is taken on who receive mentoring and work experience to assist them at the end of their studies to get places in large commercial law firms. The scheme has a great record of success. For each of the last few years we have hosted here the new cohort of Stephen Lawrence Scholars. They are given a tour of the Court. They attend a hearing, and they then spend an hour or so discussing the case they saw and anything else they want to talk about with me.

Whether that discussion is a treat for them is not for me to say. But it is certainly a treat for me. Each time I find it exhilarating and rewarding to meet the Stephen Lawrence Scholars and I am always impressed by their intelligence, their enthusiasm and their engagement, and the penetrating questions they ask. It has become an event that I look forward to each year.

The point of mentioning these examples is, I hope, to make clear to you that I am deadly serious when I express the desire of the Supreme Court to support your Association and say that you have an ally here. If you think at any time

that there is anything that we could do that would be of practical assistance to your Association, then please do not hesitate to reach out to us, as my daughter would say. We will do our best to help.

For now, I repeat my warm welcome to you all, and hand over to Judge Cordella Bart-Stewart OBE, a member of the steering committee of the Association. Cordella, the floor is yours.