APPRECIATING OUR STAFF

Special Sitting in Honour of the Honourable Mme Justice Désirée Bernard

The Hon Mme Justice Désirée Bernard CCH, O.R., the first female Judge appointed to the Caribbean Court of Justice, received good wishes and bid farewell, when local and regional representatives gathered in Guyana for a special sitting of the Court in her honour in February 2014, on the final day of the itinerant sitting in Georgetown.

Mme Justice Bernard, a citizen of Guyana, served as Judge of the CCJ from its inauguration in April 2005, and has made a significant contribution to the development of Caribbean jurisprudence. Prior to joining the CCJ, Mme Justice Bernard established a number of professional “firsts,” being appointed the first and only female President of the Organization of Commonwealth Caribbean Bar Associations (OCCBA); first female High Court Judge of the Supreme Court of Guyana (1980); the first female Justice of Appeal (1992); the first female Chief Justice of Guyana and in the Commonwealth Caribbean (1996); and the first female Chancellor of the Judiciary of Guyana and in the Commonwealth Caribbean (2001).

For her exceptional contribution to the improvement of the status of women and to the development and practice of law, Mme Justice Bernard received several awards, the most notable being the Cacique Crown of Honour; and the Order of Roraima, Guyana’s 3rd and 2nd highest national awards respectively. In July 2005, the Honourable Judge was awarded the CARICOM Triennial Award for Women. She was awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) by the University of the West Indies in November 2007. In February 2011, Mme Justice Bernard was appointed a judge of the Inter-American Development Bank Administrative Tribunal, based in Washington DC, USA.

The special sitting of the Court was presided over by the President of the CCJ, the Rt Hon Sir Dennis Byron. Also in attendance was the Chief Justice of Belize, the Hon Mr Justice Kenneth Benjamin, who together with Chancellor Carl Singh of Guyana, sat with the CCJ Bench.

Submissions were made to the Court by various speakers. Contributions were made by the Hon Mr Justice Carl Singh, the Hon Mohabir Anil Nandlall, Attorney-General of Guyana, His Excellency Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of CARICOM, the Hon Mr Justice Stanley Moore, Justice of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Swaziland, Professor Harold Lutchman representing the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, Mr Oswald Barnes, representing the CCJ Trust Fund, Mr Ronald Burch-Smith, President of the Guyana Bar Association and Ms Simone Morris-Ramlal of the Guyana Association of Women Lawyers. A video message by Ms Tracey Robinson, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), was also aired at the sitting.

President Byron, in his contribution, highlighted the attributes of Mme Justice Bernard’s career under the themes of excellence and integrity. He urged everyone to:
“...celebrate her achievements not merely in word, but also in deed, by making excellence and integrity the hallmark of our future endeavours”

Chancellor Singh’s contribution underlined, among other things, that:
“[Mme Justice Bernard’s] legal career and her attainment of a seat on the CCJ is eloquent testimony of the heights achievable by women in the legal profession who commit themselves to the disciplined and dedicated study of law.”

Secretary-General of CARICOM, His Excellency Irwin La Rocque, added that Mme Justice Bernard:
“...has shown what women can achieve in a not so level playing field and she has set an awe-inspiring example for women to follow.”
Staff Says Farewell to the Honourable Mme Justice Bernard

The Hon Mme Justice Désirée Bernard took the oath of office as a Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice at the Court’s Inauguration Ceremony, on Saturday, 16 April 2005. From then, until the date of her retirement, she has been the Court’s lone female Judge and has served the institution more than creditably during her nine-year career. The members of staff could not let the occasion of her retirement go unmarked.

On Wednesday, 26 February 2014, the staff celebrated Mme Justice Bernard with fashion - A Grand Hat and Fashion Show - where staff portrayed a milestone in her life through fashion:

Elevation to the Bench of the Caribbean Court of Justice, portrayed by Wendy Lewis-Callender, Deputy CEA
First Female Chancellor and Head of Judiciary of Guyana, portrayed by Semone Moore, Customer Service Officer
Conferral of Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of London, portrayed by Sandra Dee Brown, Secretary
First Female Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Guyana, portrayed by Wendy Mitchell, Secretary

In spite of the wistfulness of the occasion saying au revoir to Mme. Justice Bernard turned out to be an entertaining and fun event.

Mme Justice Bernard’s passions include not only the rule of law and the administration of justice, but also the improvement of the status of women and children’s rights. The expression of her interest in proper upbringing for children was recognised through a presentation put on by the Joshua Home for Boys of Santa Rosa Heights, Arima. The pupils honoured her contribution to the home through a special presentation titled “The Rights of the Child”. They also presented the retiring judge with a special token of appreciation.

According to a quotation by Abe Lemons, “The trouble with retirement is that you never get a day off.” Mme Justice Bernard certainly remains a valuable resource to the Court and though she is not physically present, she remains with the Court in spirit and essence.
2014 Administrative Professional Day/ Week

This year, the RJLSC and CCJ, like numerous other organisations, honoured their secretarial staff who continue to significantly contribute to its success with beautiful bouquets of flowers, lunch with their bosses and tokens of appreciation.

Executive Secretary of the RJLSC, Catherine Beard, was very instrumental in organising the week’s activities for her colleagues, Executive Secretary Sherry-Anne Ramhit and Secretaries Genevieve Gray, Andrea Sohn, Susan Medina, Lisa Furlonge, Debra Gibbs, Wendy Mitchell, Deborah Williams, Collette Brown, Sandra Dee Brown, Candis Cayona, Dionne Stevens, Jennifer Scipio-Gittens, Sue Lan Chin, and Heather Dyer-Thompson.

These staffers were greeted by beautiful arrangements on their desks at the start of the week’s celebrations and were honoured at the traditional Wednesday luncheon in the company of their bosses at which they were presented with tokens of appreciation.

Judiciary Sports and Family Day 2014 -Let’s Go Rio - The Brazilian Experience

The Caribbean Court of Justice was invited to be a part of the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago’s Sixth Biennial Sports and Family Day on 7 June 2014, which took place at the Ato Boldon Stadium in Arima. The event, aptly themed, “Let’s Go Rio - The Brazilian Experience” was in keeping with the 2014 World Cup that was held in Rio de Janeiro during the period June to July 2014.

Members of Staff and their families heeded the call to participate and came out in their numbers to take the Court to 4th place standing when the overall results were called. From flat races to obstacle courses, from children’s events to down-right ‘wacky’ novelty events, team CCJ showed themselves strong, placing among the top three in almost all the events in which they participated.

The staff enjoyed each other’s company displaying great team work and camaraderie. Participation in events like these is geared towards building cohesion and harmony in teams that translates from the playing field to the work bench. The CCJ extends special thanks to the Judiciary’s organizing team for their enthusiastic and energized co-ordination of the day and for inviting Team CCJ to be a part of the excitement.

We look forward to Sports and Family Day 2016!
World Cup Semi-Finals Lime “I Dare You”

On Wednesday 9 July 2014, the Training and Conference Room at the Caribbean Court of Justice was transformed into a VIP Lounge complete with bar settings, lounge furniture, LED lights and big screens. The atmosphere was set and ready for the Judges and Staff World Cup Semi-Final Lime “I Dare You”!

Judges and personnel were joined by friends and specially invited guests, to create an afternoon filled with entertainment and laughter, camaraderie and fun. food and drinks and of course, an entertaining World Cup semi-final football match between The Netherlands and Argentina, ending in penalty kicks with Argentina emerging the winner.

The 2.30 p.m. kick-off time was signalled with a “Are you a Bandwagonwist?” trivia competition. This competition separated the wheat from the tares in that the true football followers emerged. Michael Daniel, Judge’s Usher; Marton Williams, Court Security Officer and Sandra Dee Brown, Secretary, took to the stage to showcase their knowledge of football countries, Brazil, Germany and Holland respectively. There was certainly some stiff competition that ended in a tie between Michael Daniel and Marton Williams who proved themselves not to be bandwagonnists!

The Judges, personnel and family members provided the evening’s entertainment featuring the following headline acts:

Sir Dennis Byron, President (Pitbull)  
Candis Cayona, Secretary (Jennifer Lopez)  
Sermone Moore, Customer Service Officer (Claudia Leitte)  
Sandra Dee Brown, Secretary (Supporting cast)  
Performing We Are One (Ole Ola)

Mr Justice Saunders, Judge (Shakira)  
Collette Brown, Secretary, Jacqueline Swaby, Court Support Officer and Veronica Brooks, Court Security Officer (Waka Waka Girls)  
Performing Waka Waka (This time for Africa)

Tamron Mitchell, CCJ family member (Shakira)  
Terissa Mitchell, CCJ family member (Waka Waka Girl)  
Performing Waka Waka (This time for Africa)

Performances to die for! It was a very entertaining evening and the atmosphere, great acts and good camaraderie made for a memorable experience.

Research in the workplace has shown that a work environment where all persons can feel connected in a meaningful way conduces to greater productivity and a deeper sense of commitment to the institution’s strategies. The World Cup Semi-Finals lime certainly appeared to have contributed to developing that environment.