



LADY JUSTICE

ISSUE
#2

The Bench & Beyond

JUSTICE IN TRANSITION: *Mind, Machine and Meaning*

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EDITOR'S NOTE



This second issue of Lady Justice – The Bench Beyond is published at a moment of discernible transition within the Eastern Caribbean’s justice systems. Across courts, chambers, and communities, familiar assumptions about how justice is delivered, experienced, and sustained are being tested by technological change, evolving social realities, and a growing willingness to reflect on the human self who bears judicial responsibility.

The theme of this issue: *Justice in Transition: Mind, Machine and Meaning*, reflects not a passing trend, but a deeper recalibration of what it means to do justice well.

That recalibration is most clearly embodied in our feature interview with the Acting Chief Justice. Far from a formal exchange, the conversation offers a rare and candid

reflection on judicial vocation, leadership, and service. The Chief Justice speaks not in terms of performance or authority, but of stewardship, courtesy, and trust. She reflects openly on the weight of office, the isolation that can accompany judging, and the quiet disciplines required to sustain integrity in small societies where judicial decisions are both visible and personal. In doing so, she anchors the themes of this issue not in abstraction, but in lived judicial experience.

At the institutional level, the judiciary stands at the intersection of continuity and change. Technology promises efficiency, accessibility, and modernisation, yet it also challenges courts to safeguard fairness, transparency, and human judgment. These tensions

are not merely theoretical. In her Opening of the Law Year Address on 12 January 2026, the Chief Justice spoke directly to the Court’s ongoing efforts to harness technology responsibly, including the continued refinement of the E-Litigation Portal, the exploration of artificial

intelligence to reduce administrative burden, and the planned enhancement of the Court’s digital platforms to improve accessibility for litigants and the wider public. As she emphasised, such innovations are intended to serve justice, not to supplant judicial responsibility. This careful bal-

ance is explored further in the article on artificial intelligence and judicial decision-making. As the Chief Justice herself observes, technology may assist, but it cannot replace judgment. Adjudication remains a profoundly human task, requiring discernment, empathy, constitutional fidelity, and moral responsibility, qualities no algorithm can replicate. [*These themes are explored further in our feature interview with the Acting Chief Justice.*]

The human consequences of technological change are examined further through the lens of access to justice. The contribution on self-represented litigants in a technology-driven court environment confronts an uncomfortable truth: that formal access does not always translate into meaningful participation. Digitisation can empower, but it can also exclude. Without intentional design and judicial sensitivity, innovation risks widening the very gaps it seeks to close. The challenge, as both the article and the interview underscore, is to ensure that justice remains accessible in substance, not merely in form.

Justice in transition is not shaped by technology alone. It is also shaped by the broader realities pressing upon Caribbean societies. The article on climate justice situates law firmly within lived experience, reminding us that for Small Island Developing States, climate change is not an abstract future risk but an immediate and existential concern. Courts are increasingly called upon to engage with complex scientific evidence,

Justice In Transition:
Mind, Machine and
Meaning

Meet The Executive of the ECAWJ



Chief Justice (Ag.)
Margaret Price-Findlay
Consultant



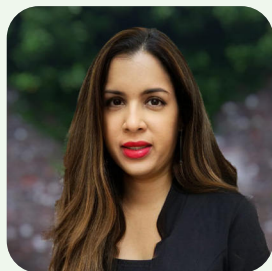
Justice Kimberly
Cenac-Phulgence
President



Justice Tamara Gill
1st Vice President



Master Tamara
Foster
2nd Vice President



Justice Angelica
Teelucksingh
Secretary



Registrar Chanelle
Petty Barrett
Asst. Secretary



Justice Cybelle
Cenac-Dantes
**Public Relations
Officer**



Chief Magistrate
Ngaio Emanuel
Treasurer

Meet The Newsletter Committee



Justice Cybelle
Cenac-Dantes
Chair



Justice Ann-Marie
Smith



Justice of Appeal
Nicola Byer



Justice Agnes
Actie
Asst. Treasurer



Chief Magistrate
Ngaio Emanuel



Magistrate Veronica
Thomas



Registrar Chanelle
Petty Barrett



Master Tamara
Foster

global obligations, and questions of intergenerational equity, while remaining attentive to the human communities most affected by environmental harm.

The theme of the judicial self emerges most powerfully in the reflections on wellness and menopause. These contributions speak candidly to experiences long left unspoken within professional spaces. They echo the Chief Justice's own acknowledgment that judging is demanding, often isolating work, and that a judiciary which neglects wellbeing risks undermining the very qualities upon which sound judgment depends. Wellness, resilience, and self-knowledge are not peripheral to justice; they are integral to its faithful administration.

This issue also gestures beyond the courtroom, through creative and community-focused initiatives that remind us that justice does not exist in isolation from culture, compassion, or shared purpose. Together, the contributions invite reflection rather than prescription. They ask how we preserve the human heart of justice while engaging responsibly with new tools and new demands. They challenge us to consider not only what justice does, but who we are as its stewards in a changing world.

In that sense, this issue does not merely document transition. Guided by leadership grounded in service, restraint, and humanity, it participates in it.

LEADERSHIP & VISION

In Conversation with the Acting Chief Justice

This interview was conducted by the Deputy Chief Registrar Daniela Sylvestre-Chambers on the 18th December, 2025. It has been edited by the Editor for length and thematic coherence, while preserving the substance and voice of the Chief Justice.

Service, Stewardship, and Justice in Transition

Introduction

Justice Margaret Price Findley did not set out to lead an institution in transition. Her path to the office of Acting Chief Justice was neither planned nor pursued with ambition. It emerged, instead, from a lifelong sense of duty to the law and a willingness to serve when called upon. In this extended conversation, she reflects on vocation, leadership, technology, and the human responsibilities that attend judicial office in small Caribbean societies.

What follows is not a policy statement. It is a meditation on service.

A Calling Discovered Early

"I was about twelve years old," the Chief Justice recalls, tracing her interest in the law to a moment that has stayed with her for decades. "We were not allowed to watch television during the week, but one afternoon my father left the television on after watching cricket, and I came across an English programme called Crown Court."

Something about the courtroom, the order of proceedings, and the seriousness of purpose seemed to have captured her attention. *"When I finished watching, I said*

AT A GLANCE

Margaret Price-Findlay

- National of Trinidad and Tobago; born and raised in Diego Martin
- Secondary education at Holy Name Convent, Port of Spain
- LL.B (Honours), University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus
- Legal Education Certificate, Hugh Wooding Law School
- Admitted to legal practice in 1987
- Began legal practice in Trinidad and Tobago; later practised in the British Virgin Islands
- Founder and former Principal, Price-Findlay & Co., British Virgin Islands
- Appointed Judge of the High Court of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court in 2009
- Served as a High Court Judge in multiple ECSC jurisdictions, including Grenada and Saint Lucia as both a civil and criminal Judge
- Elevated to the Court of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court in September 2022
- Appointed Acting Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court in May 2025
- First Trinidad and Tobago-born jurist to serve as Chief Justice of the ECSC
- Current acting appointment scheduled to run until 2029

to my father, 'That is what I want.' From that moment, the seeds were sown and I never truly wavered from that."

Law appealed not as status or spectacle, but as structure and purpose. It offered a means of resolving conflict through reasoned judgment, fairness, and discipline. The attraction, she explains, was always to the work itself.

From Practice to the Bench

Becoming a judge was never part of an early plan. As she tells it, the journey began almost by chance in 1995, shortly after she had just opened her own practice, when then Magistrate Frederick Bruce-Lyle, later to become a trusted friend, went on an extended vacation and she was asked to act in his absence. "It is not something that I ever addressed my mind to before," she recalls, admitting that she "couldn't understand why [she] had been asked, of all people."

That first experience awakened something she did not immediately recognise. She enjoyed the work, but returned to private practice and, as she puts it, "never gave it another thought" for many years. It was only later, after repeated encour-

agement to consider the Bench by then Chief Justice Rawlins, that she agreed, still cautiously, to "dip [her] feet in the water again."

What followed was anything but comfortable. Expecting a limited, temporary assignment, she was instead told by Chief Justice Rawlins that she would be sent to replace a senior judge, Justice Dame Janice Pareira. The moment remains vivid.

"I think if I wasn't leaning on my car, I would have most probably fallen

down," she says, with characteristic candour.

That sense of surprise, even disbelief, never translated into entitlement. For her, judicial office was never something to be claimed or owned. It was something to be accepted when called upon. As she explains elsewhere in the interview, she always understood the law, and by extension judging, as *service*. The Bench was not about readiness in the abstract, but about stepping forward when the court needed help, when practitioners were asked "*to come forward and assist the court.*"

That understanding has stayed with her. Judicial office, in her view, is not a destination reached in comfort, but a responsibility undertaken in humility; one that requires steadiness, honesty, and a willingness to serve, even when the call comes unexpectedly,



leaning on a car in a courthouse car park.

Justice as Service, Not Performance

Throughout the interview, the Chief Justice returns to one central idea: justice is not a performance. Authority, she cautions, must never be confused with superiority. Courtesy, for her, is not ornamental. It is essential. *“Treating people with respect, always,”* she says, because how people experience the court matters.

That experience, she reminds us, is shaped long before a judge ever speaks. From the first point of contact to the Bench itself, each interaction leaves an imprint. Small things matter. As she explains, *“while \$100 to us as lawyers may mean spending money... it may mean a lifeline for somebody else.”* Respect, then, is not abstract. It is grounded in an awareness of the realities court users bring with them.

She is wary of judging that seeks validation. The court, in her view, is not a stage. It is a place where people arrive at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives. *“Many a time you come to a decision as a judge... that isn’t satisfactory to anybody,”* she observes, underscoring that justice is measured not by approval but by responsibility.

How judges speak, how they listen, how they explain their decisions all matter, because the law, she has always believed, is *service*. That understanding shapes

her approach to leadership. It is exercised quietly, deliberately, and without flourish. *“Certainly leadership by example,”* she says, nothing more, and nothing less.

Leadership and the Weight of Office

Assuming the role of Acting Chief Justice brought with it an acute awareness of responsibility. She does not describe the appointment as an achievement, but as a trust. It was, as she herself notes, *“not a position that I sought, or ever thought,*

ried and what it demanded in return.

Leadership, in her view, is not exercised for personal recognition. It is measured by restraint and fairness. She speaks simply of the obligation of *“being even-handed, being fair”* in the handling of the position, conscious that the authority of the office is always larger than the individual who temporarily occupies it.

She recalls that when she was first asked to assume the office of Chief Justice, her instinct was hesitation rather than confidence. She turned, as she often does, to the person whose judgment she trusts most in the world: her sister. She laid out, carefully and at length, all the reasons she believed she was not the right person for the role. When she finished, her sister asked a single, disarming question: *“why not you?”* She could think of no answer to it. That moment, she reflects, crystallised the responsibility before her more clearly than any formal process could have done.



would be possible.” What mattered instead was how the office was car-

ried and what it demanded in return. That sense of stewardship extends to the institution itself. Her focus is not on imprinting personality, but on strengthening systems.



She speaks of “*bringing the court further into the 21st century*,” of aligning internal procedures with efficiency and good administration, and ultimately of “*bringing back the trust, regaining the trust and confidence*” of the public the court serves. Institutions, she recognises, must endure beyond any one tenure.

Judging in small societies presents particular challenges. Decisions are visible, and their consequences are often deeply personal. Outcomes are not always welcomed, and approval cannot be the measure of correctness. Judicial independence, in that context, does not mean withdrawal or detachment. It requires discipline, consistency, and fidelity to principle, even when decisions are unpopular and keenly felt.

The Work Behind the Title

Since assuming the role of Acting Chief Justice, one of the more unexpected aspects of the position has been the scale of its administrative responsibilities. She speaks frankly about the adjustment. “*It has been challenging*,” she acknowledges. The office, she explains, extends far beyond the

courtroom: sitting on four Judicial and Legal Services Commissions and chairing four of them, engaging across the region at the highest levels of government, and overseeing a wide range of internal administrative matters, including appointments and institutional governance.

Asked how she is managing the demands of the role, her response is honest. “*Badly*,” she says, before elaborating that the balance of her work is presently weighted heavily away from the Bench. “*Right now it’s about 70/30, in favour of the administrative work*.” The task, she observes, is less a simple trade-off than a complex juggling exercise, “*a balancing act, not with two scales, but six*.”

What has made this possible, she is quick to emphasise, is the support around her. “*I have to say that the staff have been worth their weight in gold*,” she says, underscoring that the demands of the office cannot be carried alone. Even so, she is clear that this remains a learning process. “*I am still learning*,” she reflects, as she works to strike an appropriate balance between

In Her Own Words

What first drew you to the law, and when did you know it was the right path for you?

I was about twelve years old... when I watched Crown Court. When I finished watching, I said to my father, ‘That is what I want.’ From that moment, I never really thought of doing anything else.

How do you understand the role of leadership when one is entrusted with the office of Chief Justice, even in an acting capacity?

Leadership for me is about service and stewardship. The office is not mine; it is held in trust. Authority must be exercised with restraint.

What does judicial independence mean in practical terms for judges working in close-knit Caribbean communities?

Independence does not mean distance from the community. It requires discipline, grounding in principle, and consistency, particularly where social familiarity creates pressure.

In an era of rapid technological change, what should judges remain most cautious about?

Technology can assist us, but it cannot replace human judgment. Efficiency must never come at the expense of justice.

What advice would you give to young women who aspire to leadership in the legal profession?

Believe in yourself, regardless of where you start. Aim high. Perseverance and faith matter.



the administrative obligations of leadership and the judicial heart of the role.

Technology, AI, and the Limits of Automation

The Chief Justice speaks about technology with measured optimism. She recognises its benefits, particularly for courts serving multiple jurisdictions. Electronic filing, virtual hearings, and improved digital access have transformed court administration.

Yet her caution is clear. *“Artificial intelligence can be helpful as a research or administrative tool,”* she says, *“but it cannot replace judgment.”*

Judging, she explains, involves discretion, context, and moral reasoning. *“Responsibility for decisions rests with the judge. That responsibility cannot be delegated to technology.”*

She echoed this position publicly in her Opening of the Law Year Address on 12th January 2026, where she spoke of improving the E-Litigation Portal and expanding digital platforms to make courts more accessible to litigants, while emphasising that innovation must serve justice, not supplant it.

Efficiency, in her view, is not an end in itself. It must always be aligned with fairness.

The conversation then turns to the human cost of judging: the isolation of decision-making, the emo-

tional weight of responsibility, and the growing recognition that judicial wellness is integral to the quality of justice delivered. It is here that questions of technology, leadership, and meaning ultimately converge.

The Weight of Judging and the Question of Wellness

When the conversation turns to judicial wellness, the Chief Justice does not speak in abstractions. She speaks candidly about the solitude of judging and the emotional discipline it demands. Judging, she acknowledges, is often a solitary exercise. Decisions are made alone, responsibility is carried personally, and once a matter is concluded, a judge must move on to the next, regardless of the weight of what has gone before.

That isolation is frequently invisible to the public, and sometimes even within the profession itself. Judges are expected to be composed, decisive, and resilient, yet are rarely afforded space to acknowledge the cumulative toll of constant adjudication. The Chief Justice is clear that this silence is neither healthy nor sustainable.

She emphasises that judicial wellness is not a peripheral concern but one directly connected to the quality of justice delivered. In that context, she points to concrete steps now being taken within the Court, including the introduction of a new insurance policy that provides coverage for aspects of mental health. More importantly, she encourages judicial officers not to suffer in silence. Where a

judge feels overwhelmed or is struggling, she urges them to speak up, whether to her directly, to the Chief Registrar, or to the Court’s human resource officer, so that support can be accessed early rather than after crisis.

She welcomes the growing willingness within judicial leadership and education spaces to address mental health, balance, and resilience openly. She notes with approval that the Court’s annual judicial training programme now includes a dedicated component on judicial wellness, recognising that the demands of the office require structured attention, not silence. The presence of leadership prepared to look at judicial well-being in a holistic way, she suggests, marks an important shift. Such conversations are not signs of fragility, but of institutional maturity, and of a judiciary that understands that caring for those who judge is inseparable from the administration of justice itself.

Life Beyond the Robe

She speaks just as openly about the personal disciplines that have helped her sustain the work. *“I was lucky because my son was with me when I became a judge,”* she reflects. Parenthood, she explains, imposed a discipline of balance at a time when it might otherwise have been easy for the work to consume everything. *“I had to take time out to go to his football and sporting activities,”* she says. Those moments away from court were not incidental. *“That was a release for me.”*

That instinct to step outside the intensity of judging has remained. She is frank that the demands of judg-

ing, if left unchecked, can take a toll. “*A burnt-out judge*”, she observes, “*is not a good judge*”. Maintaining balance, therefore, is not indulgence but responsibility.

Asked how she now decompresses, her answers are refreshingly unpretentious and ordinary. She goes to cricket. She watches Forensic Files. She reads widely, particularly crime and legal fiction, mentioning authors such as James Patterson, John Grisham, and Agatha Christie. Christie’s meticulous detective, Hercule Poirot, remains a particular favourite.

Music, too, plays an important role. She says she loves music across genres: Soca, disco, R&B,



classical, adding simply, that “*it does not matter to me*”. What matters is the release it provides, and the way these small, deliberate pleasures create space away from the weight of decision-making. They are part of how she preserves perspective, ensuring that the intensity of judging does not eclipse the steadiness the role requires.

Human Judgment in a Technological Age

These reflections return the conversation to first principles. As courts adopt new technologies and explore innovative tools, the Chief Justice consistently anchors the discussion in human responsibility. Technology, she makes clear, can assist the work of the courts, but judgment itself remains a human function. Discretion, empathy, and moral reasoning are not matters that can be delegated to machines.

In her view, the danger lies not in innovation itself, but in forgetting its limits. Digital platforms may improve access, artificial intelligence may assist research, and automated systems may enhance efficiency, but none of these can replace the judicial mind engaged with the lived realities of those who appear before the court.

For that reason, she emphasises that technological reform cannot stand alone. Efforts to modernise must proceed alongside sustained attention to training, ethics, and institutional culture. The question, she suggests, is not simply what courts can do faster, but what they must continue to do carefully.

Leadership, Restraint, and Stewardship

Throughout the interview, the Chief Justice returns to the idea of stewardship. Leadership, she insists, is not about imprinting personal vision on an institution, but about safeguarding its integ-

rity during periods of change.

“The office is temporary,” she says. “The institution must endure.”

This understanding shapes her approach to decision-making, administration, and reform. It also informs her caution about public perception. Trust in the judiciary, she notes, is built slowly and lost quickly. Courtesy, consistency, and restraint are not ornamental virtues; they are foundational to legitimacy.

In small societies especially, where judges are visible and decisions resonate deeply, leadership requires constant attentiveness to principle. Independence is maintained not by distance, but by discipline.

Advice, Meaning, and Looking Forward

When asked what guidance she would offer to those coming behind her, particularly young women, the Chief Justice’s response is grounded in her own journey and delivered without artifice.

“Believe in yourself, regardless of where you start from,” she says. She recalls the words of a lecturer who once urged perspective alongside ambition: “Reach for the stars, at least you will reach the top of the tree.”

She speaks candidly about where she began. *“I come from a small village in Trinidad. My parents didn’t have much. I wasn’t a child of privilege.”* What she did have, however, was a dream, and parents who worked tirelessly to support it. *“I had a dream, and my parents worked hard to help me achieve that dream.”*

Academic confidence did not come early. *“I wasn’t the best student in primary school or in high school,”* she admits. It was only when she reached the University of the West Indies that something shifted. *“When I got to UWI, something clicked. I said to myself, I can’t fail now.”* She did not want to disappoint those who had sacrificed so much. *“They had sacrificed a lot,”* she says simply. *“I wanted to hold on to that twelve-year-old dream.”*

Her advice is therefore neither hurried nor superficial. *“Ambition and patience don’t always go hand in hand, but you have to be patient.”* She cautions against allowing circumstance to define possibility. *“Don’t look at yourself and say, I’m from the ghetto, or I’m from a lower-income bracket. Don’t let your present circumstances define who you are or who you can be.”* Progress may be gradual, she acknowledges, but it is possible. *“It may take time, but you can get there.”*

She closes without triumphalism. *“I did not seek this office, but it came.”* And in moments of uncertainty, she offers one final counsel: *“Some-*



Believe in yourself, regardless of where you start from

times you just have to believe in God and make the best of the situations you find yourself in.”

It is a fitting note on which to close. Throughout the conversation, the Chief Justice resists grand statements about legacy. Instead, she returns consistently to service, responsibility, and to meaning found in doing the work well. Taken together, her reflections illustrate what endurance, patience, and fidelity to the work

can produce over time: not excellence that arrives fully formed, but justice shaped through perseverance, and an institution strengthened by those willing to serve it steadily, so that the work, and the values behind it, may endure.

Closing Reflection

This interview captures a judiciary in transition, not merely in its tools and processes, but in its willingness to reflect on the human

self who judges. It reminds us that justice is not delivered by systems alone, but by people entrusted with power and bound by conscience.

In an age of accelerating technology and rising expectations, the Chief Justice’s reflections offer a steadying perspective: that judgment remains human, leadership remains a trust, and justice endures only where it is exercised with integrity, restraint, and care.

MIND AND MACHINE

Human(e) Judging in the time of AI: Artificial Intelligence and Decision-making in the Caribbean Courts



Author: The Honourable Mr. Justice Westmin R.A. James, Puisne Judge, Judiciary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Artificial intelligence or AI has already begun reshaping the legal landscape, and the judiciary is not insulated from those developments. AI analyses large bodies of data, recognises patterns and generates predictions. Amidst the ubiquity of AI, for us as judges,

the question is no longer whether AI can assist judicial decision-making, but how far that assistance should extend, particularly within Commonwealth Caribbean legal systems which are grounded in constitutional supremacy, open justice, procedural fairness and due process. As Caribbean judges, we cannot ignore these advances, we must utilize them but as guardians of the Constitution. The real challenge for us will be in governing its use through strong ethical rules, robust oversight, and unwavering commitment to constitutional values.

Use of AI by Courts around the World

Across the world, courts are using AI.¹ The United Kingdom uses AI-driven tools for legal research and case triage, but judicial decisions remain entirely human.² Estonia’s highly publicised ex-

periment with “AI judges” for small claims has human review and an automatic appeal to a real judge.³⁴ Even bold innovators maintain constitutional safeguards. In Shenzhen, China, judges use a specially developed AI model daily to draft judgments.⁵ Canada and Germany have also incorporated AI into case management to reduce delays and manage backlogs, but only within rigorous frameworks of data protection, privacy, and human oversight. Similarly, in the Caribbean, opportunities exist for the Judiciary. Caribbean courts can benefit from AI to manage caseloads, inform the public, and even bridge language gaps.

Caribbean Judicial Uses of AI

For the Caribbean, AI presents opportunities uniquely suited to the region’s challenges. Small jurisdictions face chronic resource constraints, under-resourced registries,

and growing caseloads.

AI can ease these pressures if deployed responsibly. In this section, the article provides an imaginative sketch of AI use cases.

AI can play a role in providing more advanced case management and advice for Caribbean Court users than the current systems. E-filing and case management tools can include machine learning. This can provide more advanced functions, including classifying, extracting and redacting documents. It can also raise potential issues in cases for the judicial officer to consider at case management, possibly allowing a case to be resolved without a need for trial, such as in constitutional cases if there is potential abuse of process.

Natural language processing tools, including chatbots, can support court functions. Chatbots trained on court procedures and guidance could provide people with general information about court processes and timelines, advice on preparing procedural documents, or information about where to go next, including, for e.g., help with automated payment of fines, identifying errors and queries in probate proceedings, translating for marginalised groups and helping self-represented litigants.

Predictive analytics can be used to help courts decide cases on personal injuries. AI systems can rapidly scan and analyze authorities in a jurisdiction and find the cases that are most similar to the

injuries, the effect of those injuries and update those awards to current market rates for determining general damages and calculating loss of earnings. In criminal cases, AI could assist with identifying relevant sentencing ranges or highlighting aggravating and mitigating factors discussed in case law and assist with jury instructions.

AI-powered transcription, voice recognition, and translation tools would significantly accelerate trial processes. Predictive models could assist fact-finding for certain types of evidence, such as vehicular collisions, financial analysis, or forensic comparisons, always with judicial verification.

It can also provide Judges with decision support. It can be used to draft summaries of the evidence, identify authorities, determine bail and automated decision-making such as extensions of time where there is consent and draft orders.⁶ It can also help with drafting of judgments, identify legal principles and evidence not considered by the judicial officer and help with ordering of our decisions.

AI can assist but only in defined, supervised, and constitutionally respectful ways

With all of these possible use-cases, it must be remembered that the role of judges is to safeguard justice, not to automate it; efficiency cannot override the ethical duties of judges. What remains uniquely human, and undeniably essential, is our ethical compass. AI's involvement must never

threaten adjudicative independence and procedural fairness and remain firmly subordinate to the principles of open justice, fairness, and human dignity.

Firstly, AI must not exercise judicial power or make value-laden determinations such as credibility, proportionality, or fairness. These require nuance; human and humane judgment informed by context, culture, empathy, and the lived realities of Caribbean societies. These are not yet, and arguably are incapable of being programmable. Even the most advanced AI system cannot replicate a judge's duty to weigh, assess, and justify in the Caribbean context. AI, while it can assist judges, cannot replace the wisdom, integrity, duty, and moral judgment that the Constitution entrusts to us.

Second, AI should never operate opaquely. Any AI tool introduced into judicial workflow must be transparent, auditable, and explainable. A judge cannot adopt or rely on an output that cannot be reasoned through and justified. The integrity of legal processes depends on explainability. Just as if an Attorney relies on AI-generated research, he or she must be able to verify its accuracy. If a judge uses AI-driven analysis, the reasoning must still be independent and transparent. Technology cannot become a hidden participant in litigation.

Third, constitutional rights, such as equality before the law and protection of the law, impose clear limits. Algorithmic bias is well-documented internationally, including discriminatory outcomes in AI risk-assessment tools in the USA and racially skewed facial recogni-

tion systems across Europe.⁷ Caribbean courts must be vigilant to avoid importing bias embedded elsewhere. Further, technology should enhance access to justice and not widen the gap between those with digital literacy and those without.

Fourth, judges remain personally responsible for the reasoning and outcome. An AI-assisted judgment is still the court's judgment. No judicial officer should abdicate this duty by rubber-stamping algorithmic outputs. Judges in the Caribbean must be able and encouraged to craft solutions that reflect regional realities: small jurisdictions, resource constraints, and deep-rooted concerns about sovereignty and fairness. AI models heavily reliant on foreign information inhibit the ability of Caribbean courts to develop uniquely Caribbean jurisprudence.

Fifth, confidentiality cannot be compromised. AI tools require rigorous privacy and data-protection assessments before entering the judicial environment. Client data, court records, and evidence cannot be sent to tools that store or train on those inputs without explicit and informed consent. Judges must know how the technology works and must have closed datasets. Courts in Canada, for instance, require rigorous privacy and data-protection assessments before any AI tool enters the judicial environment.⁸ The EU's AI Act classifies judicial AI as "high risk," subject to strict oversight and human control.⁹ These international standards provide useful benchmarks for Caribbean adaptation.

Conclusion

AI offers remarkable opportunities for Caribbean judiciaries: increased efficiency, stronger re-

search capacity, and more accessible justice. Yet balancing technology with legal ethics demands a framework grounded in proportionality, transparency, and professional responsibility. Ethical safeguards must be institutionalized. There should be clear judicial guidelines on the permissible use of AI by judges and the attorneys that appear before them.

These guidelines should contain disclosure rules when AI-generated materials are used in litigation and adjudication. There should be security protocols for cloud-based legal tools and regular audits to detect bias or malfunction. AI can and should assist judges in the Caribbean, but it must never substitute the intellect, independence, and humanity of a judge. To echo my words in *Nextgen Pathology Ltd v Darceuil Duncan*, the Court's intelligence is not artificial and to this I now add, and remains real, ethical, and human.

¹ Solovey, Flanagan & Chen (2025): Interacting with AI at work: Perceptions and Opportunities from the UK Judiciary. 4th Annual Symposium on Human-Computer Interaction for Work: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3729176.3729192> See also: Navigating AI in the Courts: Lessons from Singapore, South Korea, and Australia: <https://www.cyberjustice.ca/2025/07/21/navigating-ai-in-the-courts-lessons-from-singapore-south-korea-and-australia/>; Remolina, Nydia and RPS Submitter, AI in the Judiciary: The Singapore Case (July 27, 2025). Singapore Management University School of Law Research Paper Forthcoming, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5367843>

² UK: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Guidance for Judicial Office Holders (2025): <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Artificial-Intelligence-AI-Guidance-for-Judicial-Office-Holders-2.pdf>

³ Marta and Gentile, Algorithms, Rule of Law, and the Future of Justice: Implications in the Estonian Justice System (31.10.2023) Policy Brief, 2023/27: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4618760>

⁴ Siitam, IT and AI at National Courts. Some examples from Estonia. ERA Forum (2025): <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12027-025-00861-9>

⁵ Liu and Li, How do Judges use Large Language Models? Evidence from Shenzhen. (2024) Journal of Legal Analysis, 16(1), 235-262. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jla/lae009>

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Worried and unsure, confident and cocky, stubborn and uncompromising, all aptly describe the broad spectrum of litigants in person one may encounter in the justice system. Litigants in person often navigate the justice system either with the uncertainty of a toddler taking its first steps or the aggression of a mother hen who senses danger. In a justice system primarily designed for legal practitioners, where it is generally assumed that both parties will have legal representation, litigants in person don't quite fit. While they have the right of access to justice and to put forward their case, and they are given an opportunity to be heard, their usual lack of legal knowledge and experience places them at a notable disadvantage.

Despite this, many persons still choose to represent themselves, as is their right to do. The research shows their reasons are many and varied. For some the reasons are entirely financial; they are un-

The Self-Represented Litigant – Access To Justice In A Tech World

able to afford the services of an attorney, and they are ineligible for legal representation via the State's legal aid programme, if one exists. Others prefer to represent themselves because of their distrust of the justice system and legal practitioners. Some litigants may be overly confident, believing they can do a better job than a legal practitioner; while others have been dissatisfied with previous legal services and have been lawyer-hopping without success. Yet others believe their case is straightforward and once they go to court and tell the truth, everything will work out in their favour. John Barwell commented on this naivety in an article in *Legal Lens* entitled *AI and the Self-Represented: How Technology is Redefining the Fight of Justice* (October 2025), when he said:

“Representing yourself is daunting. The procedures are complex, the rules unforgiving, and the emotional toll immense. Most self-represented claimants begin with a sense of moral clarity – I’m right, so I’ll be heard – only to find that truth alone is not enough.”

The harsh reality for litigants in person is that navigating the court system is not for the faint of heart. Not only is it important that litigants have some understanding of the law, but they must be able to follow the rules of procedure. This is often the most difficult hill for such litigants to climb and many a legitimate case has been

buried in the rubble of procedural impropriety. To effectively put forward their case, litigants have to have access to the applicable laws and procedures and be able to understand them; know what documents to file and when to file; have an understanding of disclosure requirements; be unafraid to address the court to seek clarity; know how to ask witnesses pertinent questions; understand the rules of evidence and be able to articulate their position orally and in writing.

Using this measure, it is not a stretch to say that by and large the majority of litigants in person are unable to properly represent themselves. While they have access to the court, they are unable to effectively participate in court proceedings. In *Sinking not Swimming- Personal Litigants and Access to Justice*, Legal Action Group (January 2019), Les Allamby shed light on the results of this lack of effective participation. His perspectives are similar to the findings of Joe Thompson and Jane Beckett in *Unrepresented Defendants: Perceived Effects on the Crown Court in England and Wales - Practitioners' Perspectives*, Ministry of Justice Analytical Series (2019). Collectively, their research shows that cases that involve litigants in person tend to progress more slowly. They experience more delays, adjournments and hearing dates as judges extend grace to such litigants by taking the time to explain the procedure to them, giving them more time to comply with procedural requirements, and generally making allowances for their lack of

understanding. Similarly, where litigants are self-represented, they are less likely to engage with opposing counsel with a view to settling because of their level of discomfort with the power imbalance in negotiating with counsel, coupled with their lack of trust of legal practitioners. As such, cases with self-represented litigants are more likely to proceed to trial on matters that could have been settled out of court. This is equally the case where a defendant in a criminal trial is self-represented as they are less likely to enter a guilty plea or to effectively mount a mitigation in a sentencing hearing.

Allamby's research also exposes a stigma, perhaps unintentional, surrounding self-represented litigants. According to his research, such litigants are not seen by the judiciary, legal practitioners and court staff as legitimate court users, but instead as an annoyance or aberration that must be tolerated until their matter concludes. To many of us who work in the justice system, the scenario in which self-represented litigants are repeatedly encouraged to seek legal assistance is familiar. While this encouragement is usually well-intentioned, it also sometimes stems from frustration in dealing with the litigants. These interactions can unwittingly convey the message to self-represented litigants that there is no place for their effective participation in the justice system, but rather they ought to be satisfied with being silent bystanders, allowing others to advocate on their behalf.

If we accept the basic principle

that people have a right to represent themselves, then we ought to consider how to make their participation in the justice system more effective. We must think in ways that empower rather than disenfranchise litigants. We must begin with seeking to understand the barriers to their participation. Grainne McKeever in *Remote Justice? Litigants in Person and Participation in Court Processes during Covid-19*, Modern Law Review (2025), provides valuable insight into four main barriers faced by litigants in person. These are intellectual barriers such as their lack of knowledge of the law and rules and where to turn for help. Practical barriers, such as missing work or arranging dependent care to attend multiple court hearings. The anxiety of appearing before the court along with the complexities of trying to find their way through a system that is unfamiliar and daunting may also pose emotional barriers. Additionally, they may face attitudinal barriers from those in authority which convey the message that they do not belong. For us in the Eastern Caribbean, overcoming these barriers will require concerted and necessary action to ensure that access to justice for litigants in person is not just another platitude but is reflected in their effective participation in the court process.

McKeever posits that the level of litigant participation is measured on a continuum which includes:

- **Non-participation** characterized by *isolation and segregation*. The litigant feels excluded, powerless, unable to, unwilling to participate.

- **Tokenistic participation**, where the litigant participates but not meaningfully, as there is *obstruction and placation*. This results from frustration due to delays, inadequate information, ineffective support, and fatigue with seeking assistance and trying to get things done.

- **Active participation**, as seen when the litigant is *engaged, collaborates and is enabled*. In this scenario, support is adequate, there is effective communication, good understanding of the court process, improved trust in the system and litigants are able to engage and present their cases meaningfully.

Interestingly, McKeever's observations are not unique to the Covid-19 situation. They play out daily in courtrooms across the Eastern Caribbean. The challenge for those of us concerned with the administration of justice is how to move the litigant in person from a position of isolation to one of being engaged and enabled.

With the digitization of many court processes including electronic filing of documents, virtual sittings and appearance (including giving evidence) via video-link, the question of the active participation of self-represented litigants still lingers. These changes make it more convenient and less costly for a self-represented litigant to be engaged in progressing their matter. They can appear in court from anywhere, without the cost of travel, and have access to documents electronically. However, these changes also have the potential to result in

digital exclusion of elderly litigants who tend to be less able to use the available technology, and litigants without access to electronic devices or reliable internet.

Additionally, Dr Kate Leader confirmed in her Written Evidence presented to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's Inquiry into the Constitutional Implications of COVID-19 (November

2020) that, even when litigants are able to access court virtually, their inability to access support services in person still resulted in feelings of isolation and distrust of the information being provided. There is a lesson for us here. While technology integration in the justice system is a good tool for facilitating the engagement and empowerment of self-represented litigants, it must be cou-

pled with other measures to make a tangible difference.

When the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court introduced the E-Litigation Portal, there was a recognition that the needs of self-represented litigants must be met. According to the ECSC's statement regarding the portal:

"The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines 'access to justice' as 'the ability of people to seek and obtain a remedy through formal or informal institutions of justice, and in conformity with human rights standards'. The ECSC's thrust of providing equal access to justice for all is in line with the UNDP's definition as such, in strengthening access to justice, the ECSC when considering the development and implementation of the current e-litigation portal, took every citizen in the OECS into consideration. Moreover, the poor, marginalized and unrepresented litigants were given special consideration based on their current realities. Hence, the introduction and implementation of a Service Bureau, manned by a member of staff from the Court Office, which has been designed to assist and maintain access to the Portal."

While the approach taken by the ECSC is commendable, it is arguable that more is needed if the right of litigants-in-person to access justice is to be safeguarded. Additionally, the fact that self-represented litigants, even if capable, cannot access the portal directly to file their documents reinforces their sense of exclusion and ought to be reconsidered.

It is argued by Michael J Wolf in *Collaborative Technology Improves Access to Justice* written in Legislative and Public Policy Vol 15:759 (2012), that "collaborative technology" (ie. interactive software and internet services)

can improve access for self-represented litigants. Wolf advocates for the use of technology in providing online access to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms which divert litigants away from the court to a more user-friendly forum for obtaining justice. He adds that collaborative technology can be used to create electronic forms and use prompts to assist litigants in completing forms and assembling documents for filing.

Undoubtedly such initiatives will be beneficial to self-represented litigants. However, this alone is insufficient and does not cater to the needs of those who are digitally excluded. A multi-pronged approach is needed. We cannot simply put a technological ban-

dage on a systemic sore. It is posited that the latter requires attention. Expansion of legal aid services will reduce the number of self-represented litigations and is a necessary and important step but cannot be the only answer. Regardless of expansion, there will always be people who are not eligible or prefer to represent themselves.

Consideration must therefore be given to how litigants in person can be equipped to present a good case. There are a few practical measures worth considering which were gleaned from the sources previously mentioned:

- Establishment of a procedural advice and information hub staffed by a lawyer who can provide guidance to litigants, helping them to find the relevant law, procedure and forms applicable to their case.

We must think in ways that empower rather than disenfranchise

- Implementation of a basic orientation program for self-represented litigants so they have a better understanding of what to expect, the court process and the roles of the different players involved.
- Making all procedural documents and guides more user-friendly, avoiding terminology that may be confusing to non-practitioners.
- Ensuring the official court website is interactive so litigants can pose questions to a chatbot or a person who can assist in finding the resources they need.

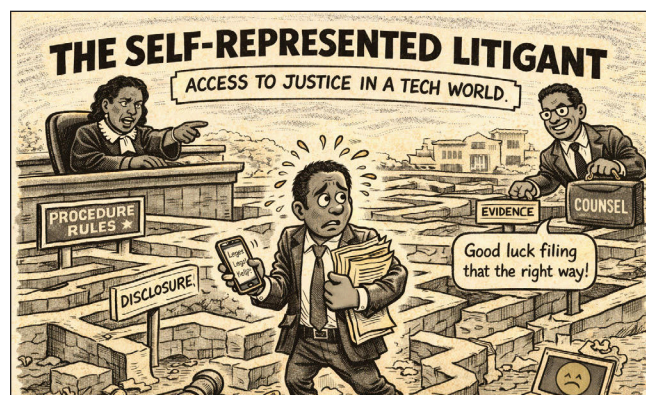
- Sensitization training for judicial officers, legal practitioners and court staff regarding best practice when engaging with litigants in person.
- Developing a culture of unbundling legal services which allows litigants to access the legal assistance that is most critical to them, without having to commit financially to full legal representation for all aspects of their case.

As the ECSC embraces technological advancements to improve access to justice, it must be mindful of the plight of the litigants in person, so they are not excluded.

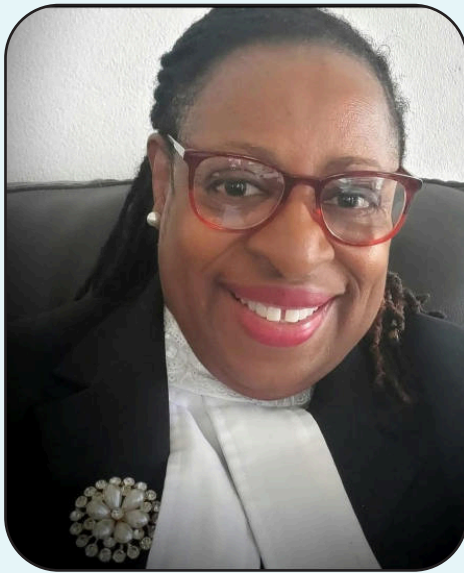
While the Service Bureau is a positive step, consideration ought to be given to whether its functions should be expanded. To address this issue, we ought to begin by systematically collecting data on self-represented litigants. While limited data is available from some jurisdictions, it is apparent that this is not a dataset that is readily available or regularly analysed. There also appears to be a paucity of regional research on access to justice for litigants in person. It is difficult for the court to make sound decisions that affect this target group without reliable data. The justice system must be accessible to the ordinary citizen. To ensure they can meaningfully participate, may require deconstruction of current norms and a new perspective on how courts operate.

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JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY



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In the wake of the devastating Category 5 Hurricane Melissa, which tore through western Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba, the call for climate justice rings with renewed urgency. For Small Island Developing States (SIDS), this was not merely another extreme weather event; it was a stark reminder of how environmental harm, global inequality, and justice increasingly intersect.

As Disaster Risk Manager Giordano Margaglio observed, rising sea temperatures in the Caribbean, between 2 and 3 degrees Celsius above average created the conditions for Hurricane Melissa's rapid intensification.[1] This scientific reality underscores a central truth for SIDS: climate change is no longer a distant or abstract threat. It is lived experience.

Climate Justice Is Needed Now More Than Ever

Hurricanes Melissa, Ivan, Irma, and Maria collectively expose the fragile position of small island states, whose contribution to global emissions is negligible, yet whose exposure to climate-related harm is profound. This imbalance lies at the heart of climate justice.

What Is Climate Justice?

Climate justice recognises that the burdens of climate change fall disproportionately on those least responsible for its causes. It frames climate change not only as an environmental crisis, but as an ethical, social, and legal challenge that demands fairness, accountability, and equitable responses.

At the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Belém, Brazil, the Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, articulated this imbalance forcefully. Speaking on behalf of SIDS, he warned that the failure of major emitters to act decisively continues to drive the world toward catastrophe and leaves vulnerable states with *"nowhere to run, nowhere to hide."*[2]

For Caribbean societies, this is not rhetoric. It is reality.

Lived Impact on Small Island States

SIDS remain acutely exposed to increasingly frequent and intense hurricanes, rising sea levels, droughts, and ecosystem degradation. Between 1970 and 2020, small island states suffered losses exceeding US\$153 billion due to weather-related extremes, an immense figure relative to their average GDP.[3]

In Jamaica, Hurricane Melissa devastated St Elizabeth, once regarded as the island's breadbasket. The destruction of agricultural land has driven up food prices and deepened economic vulnerability. Across the region, coastal erosion and sea-level rise threaten communities, infrastructure, and cultural heritage. Nearly 22 million people in the Caribbean live less than six metres above sea level, while cities such as Belize City and Georgetown remain particularly exposed.[4]

Rising ocean temperatures and acidification also imperil coral reefs, undermining fisheries, tourism, and natural coastal protection. Freshwater scarcity compounds these risks in territories where rivers are few or non-existent.

Funding, Responsibility, and Global Inaction

International climate funds, the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund were designed to support vulnerable states and meet the Paris Agreement's climate finance goals. Yet funding remains insufficient in both scale and speed. Public

adaptation finance declined from US\$28 billion in 2022 to US\$26 billion in 2023, despite sharply rising needs.[5]

Global geopolitical pressures, domestic priorities in wealthier nations, and reduced multilateral contributions have further constrained available resources. As climate analyst Rueanna Haynes has warned, the urgency of SIDS' needs, risks being overshadowed by shifting global politics, even as climate impacts intensify.[6]

Recent statements by civil society organisations following Hurricane Melissa have framed the disaster not as a natural event, but as a manifestation of climate injustice driven by fossil fuel dependence, corporate interests, and decades of political inaction.[7]

Justice in Transition: Humanity, Technology, and the Judicial Role

As justice systems evolve, climate justice increasingly challenges courts to engage with complex scientific evidence, predictive data, and technological tools. Satellites, climate modelling, and

digital mapping now form the evidential backbone of claims for loss and damage. Technology therefore plays a role, both in contributing to climate-related harm and in providing the scientific evidence used to establish that harm.

Yet data alone cannot deliver justice. While machines may calculate risk and loss, judgment remains a human responsibility. Courts are called upon to translate scientific evidence into legal reasoning, to weigh competing interests fairly, and to ensure that vulnerability does not become invisibility.

For judges and legal practitioners in this era of transition, climate justice expands the conception of the judicial role beyond dispute resolution. It invites stewardship - careful guardianship of legal principles that protect dignity, equality, and intergenerational fairness.

Conclusion

Climate justice demands more than recovery after disaster. It requires that developed nations confront their climate debt, deliver transparent and equitable financing, and support adaptation and resilience without imposing further burdens on those least responsible for the crisis.

Hurricanes like Melissa test the credibility of global commitments and force a fundamental question: whether the international community is prepared to invest in prevention and protection, rather than perpetually paying for loss.

For island nations that did not create this crisis, sustainable recovery depends on a global shift from extraction to care, from indifference to solidarity. As justice transitions through technology and modernity, its meaning must remain rooted in moral responsibility. Only then can law respond adequately to the realities of a changing climate.

”
the burdens of climate change
fall disproportionately on
those least responsible
for its causes

Resources:

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2. Statement by Prime Minister Gaston Browne at COP30, Belém, Brazil.
3. UN data on SIDS losses from weather extremes (1970–2020).
4. Regional sea-level and population exposure statistics (Caribbean and Pacific).
5. UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2025.
6. Rueanna Haynes, Climate Analytics Caribbean, interview with Sunday Guardian (Trinidad and Tobago).
7. NGO statement following Hurricane Melissa on climate injustice and fossil fuel responsibility.

THE JUDICIAL SELF



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Menopause. A word whispered more than spoken. For centuries it has lived in the shadows, tucked away in euphemisms like “the change” — as if womanhood were something to be outgrown or survived rather than celebrated. Yet every year, millions of women step into this new season — unprepared, unsupported, and too often, unheard.

October 18th, 2025, **World Menopause Day** carried a timely theme: *Lifestyle Medicine*. It is a reminder that health in midlife isn’t just about hormones or hot flashes — it’s about how we live, move, eat and think. It’s about reclaiming vitality and dignity in a stage of life that should not be endured

The Mysteries of Menopause: Fire, Fog and Faith

quietly but embraced boldly.

Menopause marks the natural end of a woman’s reproductive years — defined as 12 consecutive months without a period — and typically occurs between 45 and 55. But anyone who believes menopause is simply the “end of menstruation” hasn’t been listening to the women living through it.

The journey is not just biological; it’s emotional, cognitive and spiritual. Hormonal shifts can affect sleep, energy, libido and mood. They can cloud the mind with forgetfulness, weigh the spirit with anxiety and stir emotions that feel inexplicably raw.

For many women, the body becomes a stranger — one moment flushed with unbearable heat, the next shivering in exhaustion. There are hot flashes that wake you in the night, mood swings that hijack your patience and fatigue that no amount of caffeine can cure. Yet within this turbulence, there is also transformation — a breaking down and rebuilding of self that deserves reverence.

Menopause can feel like a betrayal — a body that once carried children, careers and dreams suddenly feels out of sync. Anxiety and depression often accompany this phase. These are not just “mood

swings.” They are physiological responses to hormonal upheaval — and they deserve compassion.

Brain fog, too, is real. Countless women describe the unsettling sensation of walking into a room and forgetting why, or losing words mid-sentence. This isn’t senility — it’s biology. Estrogen plays a vital role in brain function, influencing neurotransmitters that regulate memory, mood and mental clarity. When those hormone levels dip, so too can confidence.

Around the world, **Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)** remains one of the most effective treatments for relieving menopausal symptoms — from hot flashes and vaginal dryness to bone loss and mood changes. In the Caribbean, access remains difficult.

Some pharmacies no longer stock certain preparations; others come with prohibitive prices. Women are often told, “We don’t have that here,” or “Try natural remedies.” It’s a quiet crisis that reflects deeper systemic neglect — the way women’s health is too often placed at the bottom of the medical priority list. The irony is that the same estrogen that fuels life for decades becomes taboo once it begins to fade. While some women thrive on HRT, others may not be suitable candidates — especially those with a history of breast or uterine cancer. The key is choice — informed, safe, accessible choice.

A recent review by global menopause societies has challenged the fear surrounding HRT, emphasizing that when started early — before age 60 or within 10 years of menopause — it may even protect against heart disease, osteoporosis, and cognitive decline. The black box warning has been removed from preparations. Yet misinformation lingers like an unwelcome ghost.

A breakthrough in menopause care may have arrived in the United States last year with the recent FDA approval of elinzanetant, a non-hormonal, once-daily pill designed to treat moderate to severe hot flashes and night sweats. The drug works by blocking brain chemicals — called neurokinins — that trigger vasomotor symptoms, offering a vital option for women who cannot or prefer not to use hormone replacement therapy. Common side effects included mild fatigue, drowsiness and headaches.

However, “Lifestyle medicine” is an evidence-based prescription for living well through menopause.

Regular physical activity improves mood, boosts bone strength and reduces hot flashes. A balanced diet rich in calcium, vitamin D and phytoestrogens (found in soy, flaxseed, and legumes) can ease hormonal fluctuations. Adequate sleep, mindfulness, yoga and deep breathing can anchor the mind when the body feels adrift.

Avoiding triggers like caffeine, alcohol and nicotine can lessen night sweats and heart palpita-

tions. And though herbal remedies such as black cohosh and evening primrose oil remain popular, their scientific support is limited — and should be discussed with a physician.

In a recent small clinical trial, women who listened to 20-minute daily hypnosis audios for six weeks—focused on relaxation and “cooling imagery”—cut their hot-flash scores by more than half. Those who listened to simple white noise improved by about 40%.

Researchers say hypnosis may calm the brain’s temperature-control center, though the study group was mostly college-educated white women so more research is needed before we can call it a cure.

It’s another reminder that mind-body techniques may have a role in menopause care—alongside evidence-based medicine, lifestyle changes and good old-fashioned common sense.

Most of all, community is medicine. Talking openly about menopause breaks the silence that isolates too many women. Sharing experiences, laughter, and even frustrations helps reframe menopause not as an ending, but as a collective awakening.

In a region that prides itself on caring for the sick and the vulnerable, it is shameful that so many women still navigate menopause in silence — unable to access affordable HRT, counselling, or even a sympathetic ear.

We cannot claim to celebrate women’s empowerment while ignoring one of the most defining transitions of their lives. Menopause care must be integrated into primary health systems, with training for doctors, education for the public and affordable treatment options for all.

The word “menopause” itself is misleading. It implies stopping, when in truth, many women are just beginning anew. After menopause, life expectancy stretches for another 30 years or more — decades filled with purpose, creativity and contribution.

It is the time to rediscover self, to reclaim the body not as something fading, but something fierce. As a patient told me, “Doctor, I may sweat through the night, but I’ve learned I can survive anything.”

That is the essence of this phase — endurance wrapped in grace. Menopause is not a disease to be cured, but a journey to be understood. It calls for courage, compassion and community.

To every woman walking this road: your body is not betraying you. It is evolving. And though the fire may rage and the fog may fall, remember — light returns, always.

The best is not behind you. It is becoming you.

Author Unknown

You are not a machine. You're a soul who needs music, connection, sunsets, laughter, and small pockets of joy. Prioritize them like your life depends on it – because it does. Life isn't meant to be a cycle of stress and survival. Pause. Look up. Let the sunset remind you: you're here to live, not just to hustle. Life is not a to-do list. It's a gift. Walk slower. Hug longer. Laugh louder. Love deeper. The clock may be ticking, but your presence is timeless. We've been conditioned to believe that constant productivity equals worth, but humans weren't designed for endless output. We need moments of wonder, connection, and rest – not as rewards for hard work, but as essential ingredients for a meaningful life.



Author: Justice of Appeal
Nicola Byer

Managing (hahahaha!) menopause on the bench

life, I had no idea what it would mean for me and those closest and dearest to me.

Recently I have started to follow (of course totally pursuant to our social media policy) this content creator on Instagram called *@justbeingmelani*. She ingeniously created a gathering of women and called it the “ we do not care club”. Every one of her posts is a litany of announcements of things women who are peri-menopausal, menopausal or post- menopausal no longer care about. I can say that, while

many of them are genuinely humorous, what they ultimately revealed was a clear and succinct picture of how profoundly this journey touches each and every one of us.

Bright eyed and bushy-tailed we enter this job with no idea how our hormones will betray us, wear us down and oftentimes question our sanity in the midst of dealing with everyone else's insanity.

So for myself, from the days of sitting in chambers before going on the bench and bursting into tears, or just being angry with everyone around me for no reason and just hoping

When I started this journey of what we call THE change of

that a lawyer will not have the temerity to roll their eyes or make an off comment that could cause us to launch into an unwarranted response (release the cracken!) to now, on the other side, being calmer, and knowing and recognising my triggers (which unfortunately may be the lawyers themselves !) and yes- no longer caring about many of the things except getting the job done.

This journey will affect everyone differently, but one thing for sure, the key is to be become very acquainted with yourself. What makes you calm, what makes you function (keeping the court room like a freezer works for me so that I do not burst into sweat) .

Recognising what you have control over and letting go of the other things you do not – no point in giving yourself unwanted frustra-

tion. Control of your court lists- as small as that may seem- it is something you can control, and fending off being overwhelmed which can spiral into depression and just plain inability to cope is worth it.

I do not have the answers but these are a few things that I have been able to do for me . However this period of your life makes you FEEL ,do not be ashamed of it. Find those one or two trusted friends who understand what you are going through and vent, be vulnerable. Research doctors in the region who are now considered menopause specialists who have taken the time to understand the myriad of ways that the big M can affect women. And most importantly do NOT underestimate the need to be selfish -periodically . If its taking a walk (either for exercise or just to appreciate

God's hand in everything), going to the gym, taking salsa dance classes .

At the end of the day, the words for me are JUST DO!

You do not owe anyone an explanation . Educate your family and spouses about what this is all about (as in the 21st century men still seem to think this is a myth). Talk about what you are going through openly, raise the veil – this is no longer a secret.

A doctor told me that we need to look at this as a rite of passage of which we do come out on the other side - take heart, it's not forever and we can do it . Stick together sisters and we can manage menopause on the bench !

Peri/menopausal

Being a woman is hard.

You always want to buy something, slap someone, lose weight and eat something sweet.



When Your Profession Becomes Your Prison

By Dr. Tunde Okewale OBE

This reflective poem
is published with the
author's express per-
mission.



No one talks about the grief of getting everything you once prayed for.
The quiet ache of becoming a version of yourself the world rewards
...but your soul no longer recognises.

Because the bars aren't metal.
They're made of performance.
Praise.
And parts of you that you've silenced to survive.

They look like:
Delivering brilliance while your spirit fractures
Smiling for the room, while screaming inside
Filling every hour to avoid the parts of you you've forgotten how to feel

We were told: be someone.
But no one warned us what happens when the "someone" we became
..becomes a sentence we serve, not a self we chose.

So we overwork.
We overprove.
We overstay in rooms that stopped seeing us long ago.

And we call it ambition.
But often, it's quiet abandonment.

I've lived this.
I've worn the title so tightly, it erased my reflection.
Delivered in court while breaking in silence.
Smiled through fatigue, afraid the truth would cost me everything I'd built.

But this isn't just burnout.
This is soul-loss.
The slow forgetting of who you were before the role arrived.

And I see it everywhere:

The intern or pupil starving for validation
The associate too afraid to pause, in case they disappear
The leader who built a throne, only to find it's a cell.

We become fluent in excellence.
But illiterate in rest.
Experts in visibility.
But exiles from our own inner lives.

The strongest people I know aren't the ones who climbed the furthest.
They're the ones who remember the bottom
...and never forget who they were before the title came.

Here's what they do:

1. They name their shadows before they become sabotage
2. They build a self that stands after the role falls
3. They choose wholeness over being impressive

Because if your value only lives inside your profession,
then when it ends,
you disappear with it.

In many cultures, we're taught to become something.
But rarely are we taught how to return to ourselves.

So pause.
Not next quarter.
Not when the holiday comes.
Now.

Ask yourself:
If I took off the title, the applause, the mask...
would I still recognise the sound of my own name?
Or have I lived so long in performance...
that I forgot who I was before they were watching?

Because one day, the emails will stop.
The rooms will fall silent.
And the version they knew of you... will no longer be needed.

And when that day comes
May you not mourn the end of a role.
But celebrate the return of your self.

Because the truest freedom isn't walking away from the job
It's remembering that the key was always in your hand.
And the door... was never locked.



BEYOND THE BENCH



Author: Daniela Chambers-Sylvestre

Daniela Chambers-Sylvestre is, by origin, a daughter of Jamaica having lived in Saint Lucia for the past 9 years where she currently serves as Deputy Chief Registrar of the ECSC.

Love in all respects is an action word. Hence, when our sister island, Jamaica, was ravaged by the historic Category 5 Hurricane Melissa, the Caribbean Association of Women Judges (CAWJ) decided to put love in action.

On 5th December 2025, at its annual Creative Competition, the CAWJ dedicated a segment of its festivities to show support to Jamaica through the specially commissioned “One Love, Many Voices Caribbean Choir” which rendered their own version of the iconic “One Love” hit by the legendary Bob Marley. This unique Caribbean Choir comprised wom-

One Love

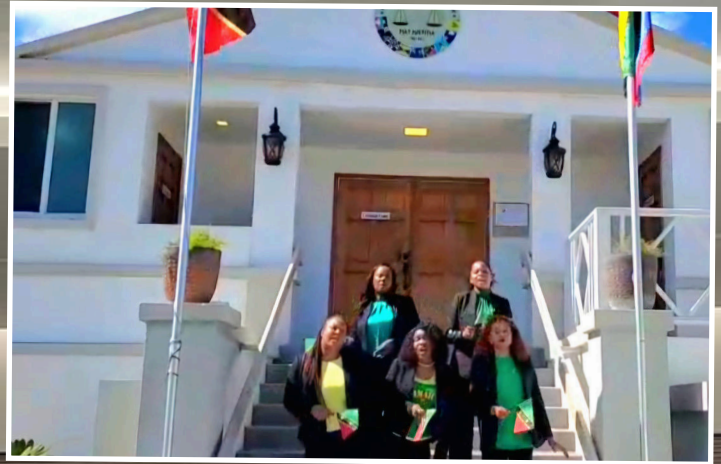
en from various women judges associations across the Caribbean including, Barbados, Bermuda, Guyana, Trinidad and, of course, the Eastern Caribbean Association of Women Judges (ECAWJ).

With such overwhelming support from the Caribbean and not that many lines to the song, the ECWAJ was assigned a sole verse and accompanying chorus. Notwithstanding, the Eastern Caribbean took on the challenge to show its combined support despite being separated by our watery borders. In spite of the short notice and myriad of demands which occupied our nine Member States and Territories, the ECWAJ was able to secure the participation of 5 of its member states and territories to participate in the creation of the Association’s contribution to the One Love video. We are extremely grateful for the labour of love from Anguilla, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia. We are also greatly appreciative of the efforts which were made by our members in Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and The Territory of the Virgin Islands, although they were, understandably, not able to participate. Our submissions would also not have been possible without the stellar work of our coordinators in our 5 participating jurisdictions, namely Registrar Chanelle Petty-Barrett in Anguilla, Justice

Zainab Jawari-Alami in Dominica, Justice Agnes Actie in Grenada, Magistrate Nisbett-Browne in Saint Kitts and Nevis and myself in Saint Lucia.

What ensued from our joint dedication and passion for service was a beautiful collage of many voices across the Eastern Caribbean singing together the same part of the same song. This was a splendid display of “One Love, One Heart, Let’s get together and feel alright”. Indeed, one only has to look at the various videos submitted from our several islands to witness the camaraderie, high-spirits and absolute fun that our Ladies of Justice in the Eastern Caribbean experienced in joining hands and hearts in pure love.

The completed CAWJ “One Love” video was also a splendid display of what unity can achieve despite our unique challenges, despite our occupation, and despite our unavoidable distance. May this effect of Bob Marley’s words through the song “One Love” be a continuous reminder of our formidable strength in unity. To borrow from our beloved Jamaica’s motto which states “Out of Many, One People”, likewise we are many islands but one people, and despite our distinctive borders, we remain connected by our shared declaration of One Love, One Heart, One Caribbean.



ECAWJ Creative Competition 2025

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual global campaign held from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day). Established in 1991 and coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, the campaign calls for an end to violence against women and girls. Since 2008, the UN has supported this effort through its **UNiTE to End Violence against Women** initiative, symbolised by the colour orange as a sign of hope for a future free from violence.

This year, the Caribbean Association of Women Judges joined the campaign by launching a Creative Competition under the theme **"Violence Against Women and Girls Stops Here!"**. The competition began locally within Women's Associations in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and the Eastern Caribbean.

Our local competition commenced in August 2025. Following receipt of submissions, the pieces were judged and 15-year-old Abrielle Sinead Ramjeawan of Saint Lucia emerged as the 1st place winner. 14-year-old Anaya Aurelien also

of Saint Lucia came in 2nd place whilst 10-year-old Calyssa Andrea Knights of St. Vincent and the Grenadines captured 3rd place.

The winners were recognised at a small prize giving ceremony on 4th December 2025 where they were presented with certificates of participation and other prizes. His Lordship, the Hon. Justice Ermin who spoke on behalf of the panel of judges lauded the participants for their creativity and understanding of the theme. Special mention was made of the youngest participant, Calyssa Knights whose submission showed that she appreciated the theme even at her tender age.



Abrielle S. Ramjeawan
1st place winner



Melissa Hippolyte (Anaya Aurelien's
mom)
2nd place winner

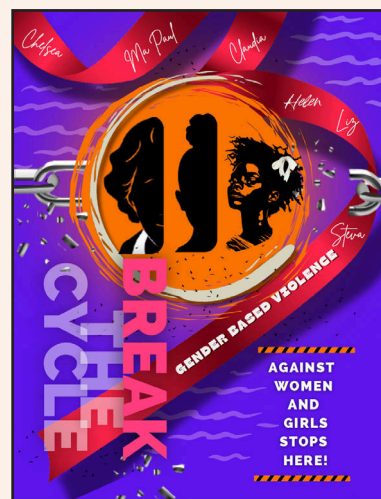


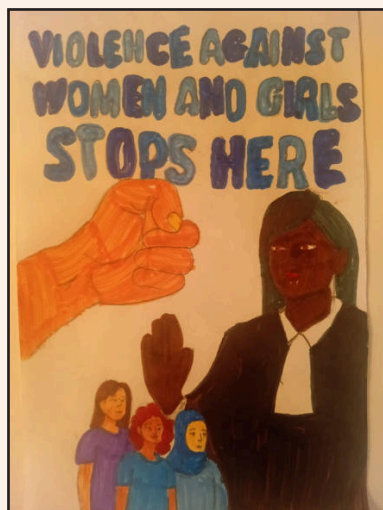
Calyssa A. Knights & father Carl
Wickham
3rd place winner

1st Place-Abrielle Sinead Ramjeawan

Name of Piece: Breaking the Generational Cycle of Violence Against Women and Girls

Description: The colour orange symbolizes a future free from violence against women and girls, aligning with the United Nations' "Orange the World" campaign. Purple is often used to raise awareness for domestic violence. The silhouettes of the women and girls show different generations. The broken chains visually represent the phrase "Break the Cycle," and the police caution tape emphasizes the words "Against Women and Girls Stops Here!" The names on the pink ribbon show that real individuals are affected by this type of violence.





2nd Place-Anaya Aurelien

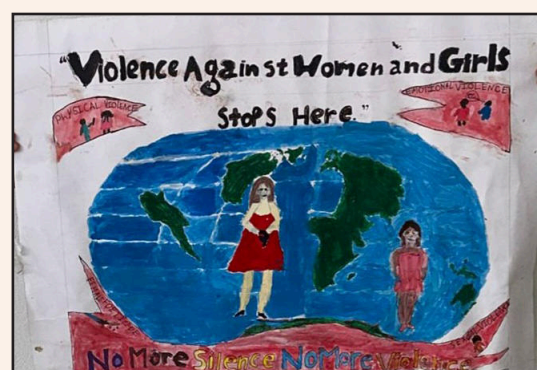
Name of Piece: Violence Against Women and Girls Stops here

Description: This piece shows a strong female judge standing up to protect women and girls from harm. Her raised hand means stop the violence. It is also a gesture of protection and justice, placed firmly between a threatening fist and a group of *diverse* women and girls. The bold colours were used to show courage, unity and justice, to remind us that we must all work together to end violence and create a world where women, and girls are safe, respected and valued.

3rd Place. Calyssa Andrea Knights

Name of Piece: Worldwide: Stop the violence, Protect our Women

Description: The piece depicts that violence against women and girls occurs all over the world. It highlights that the violence is both physical and emotional. It represents a call to all the world for there to be no more silence about gender-based violence and no more violence.



All three pieces were submitted to the Regional Creative Competition hosted by the Caribbean Association of Women Judges (CAWJ) which was held on 5th December 2025 virtually. Our participants gave a good account of themselves especially with the presentation of their pieces via pre-recorded videos. Abrielle Sinead Ramjeawan performed very well placing fifth out of nine participants. ECAWJ congratulates Abrielle, Anaya and Calyssa for their participation in this competition and urge them to continue their creative work. We hope to see them and many more participants at the next Creative Competition.

A lawyer rises and says, “Your Honour, I have just one final point.”

The judge smiles and replies, “Counsel, I admire your optimism.”

Why do judges value clear submissions?

Because the shortest argument is often the one that respects the court the most.

Counsel announces, “Your Honour, I will be very brief.”

The judge nods and replies, “We live in hope.”

In the court we know:

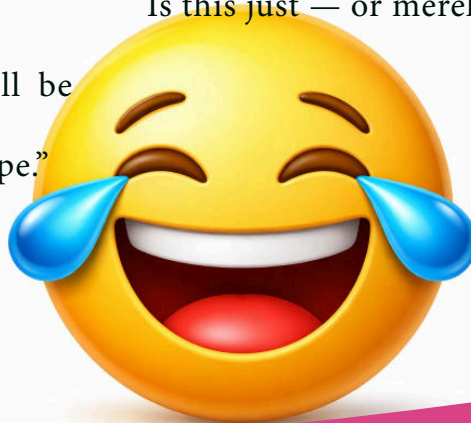
when the submissions are finally finished, the real work has only just begun.

A judge is asked, “Will artificial intelligence ever replace judges?”

The answer comes back: “Only after it learns to say, it depends.”

Technology can draft faster than any lawyer.

But it still cannot pause, reflect, and ask, “Is this just — or merely efficient?”



JOKES

Word Find Puzzle

Explore the core ideas of Justice in Transition — Mind, Machine, and Meaning. Below are 27 key words to find in the word search puzzle. How many can you find in 5 minutes?

ACCESS
BALANCE
DATA
ETHICS
FUTURE
ISLANDS
MEANING
RESPONSIBILITY
TRANSITION

ACCURACY
CARE
DIGNITY
EVIDENCE
HUMANITY
JUDGMENT
REFLECTION
STEWARDSHIP
TRANSPARENCY

AI
CLIMATE
EQUALITY
FAIRNESS
INTEGRITY
JUSTICE
RESILIENCE
TECHNOLOGY
WELLNESS

V	R	F	Y	G	O	L	O	N	H	C	E	T	W	S
R	E	F	L	E	C	T	I	O	N	C	A	R	E	T
C	S	Y	E	C	S	Y	O	I	I	W	K	Q	L	E
L	P	C	T	D	J	P	Y	T	M	C	E	E	L	W
N	O	N	A	I	H	J	S	I	E	O	E	C	N	A
T	N	E	M	G	D	U	J	S	A	C	Y	S	E	R
Y	S	R	I	N	J	L	M	N	N	T	X	S	S	D
C	I	A	L	I	D	Y	F	A	I	R	N	E	S	S
A	B	P	C	T	J	I	L	R	N	P	V	C	Q	H
R	I	S	M	Y	E	A	G	T	G	I	I	C	E	I
U	L	N	D	N	B	E	V	K	D	H	T	A	D	P
C	I	A	F	U	T	U	R	E	T	A	C	Y	S	T
C	T	R	R	N	E	C	N	E	I	L	I	S	E	R
A	Y	T	I	X	N	C	S	D	N	A	L	S	I	X
V	E	Q	E	O	E	Q	U	A	L	I	T	Y	G	J

Scan to
Download
Puzzle



ECAWJ President's Report highlights

ECAWJ's President's Report highlights achievements, membership growth, and initiatives supporting women and girls in member territories.

Notable Achievements

- Membership increased from 43 to 54, including judges, magistrates, registrars, and retired officers.
- Rt Hon. Dame Janice Pereira appointed as the first patron on 7th August 2024.
- ECAWJ logo adopted in January 2025, designed by Joi Sandiford.
- Two members attended the NAWJ Conference in San Diego, California, from 17-19 October 2024.
- Various activities held across islands for International Women's Day 2025.

International Women's Day Activities

- Panel discussion on gender-based violence beyond physical abuse, hosted by Justice Nicola Byer.
- Emphasis on recognizing non-physical forms of abuse and providing comprehensive support to survivors.
- Activities included wearing purple, green, or white in St. Kitts and Nevis, and presentations at schools in Antigua and Barbuda.
- Food drives and wellness talks conducted in various territories.

ECAWJ Newsletter

- Launched the first issue of the ECAWJ Newsletter, "Lady Justice - The Bench Beyond," in May 2025.
- Acknowledged the efforts of the editor and newsletter committee members for their dedication and hard work.

Judicial Wellness

- Collaboration with CAWJ to produce a video for the first International Day of Judicial Wellness on 25th July 2025.

Creative Competition

- Submissions received for the creative competition. The first and second place winners were from Saint Lucia and the third from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). Special mention for SVG's participant as the youngest entrant.

Thank You

The Executive of the ECAWJ extends sincere gratitude to everyone who made our second All-Women Judges Newsletter a reality.

Special Thanks To:

The President — for always being ready to lend a hand, even at very short notice.

All contributors — who generously submitted material to enrich this issue.

Our Newsletter Team — who enthusiastically brought this issue to life.

Stephen A. Dantes — for crafting our beautiful layout and design.

Your contributions have made this issue not just possible, but meaningful. Together, we've created something truly special again.

LADY JUSTICE

The Bench & Beyond

