

CoP's wife a judge

Archie: Highest calibre selected

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Avason Quinlan-Williams, wife of acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams, is now a High Court judge.

The former magistrate, former chief magistrate Marcia Ayers-Caesar and attorney Kevin Ramcharan yesterday received their instruments of appointment from President Anthony Carmona at President's House, St Ann's.

The acting Commissioner was in the audience beaming with pride as his wife's resume was read.

In his address, Chief Justice Ivor Archie said “the highest calibre of judges” has been selected to the Bench, adding, “The judiciary is the only branch of government that has published and publicly articulated criteria for appointments.”

Opposition Senator attorney Gerald Ramdeen recently called on Archie and members of the Judicial and Legal Services Commission (JLSC) to disclose the criteria used for the appointment of High Court judges.

Ramdeen said he had decided to challenge the JLSC as he was reliably informed that it was about to announce the appointments of five new judges.

Information in public domain

Archie said he did not want headlines such as “CJ hits back” or “CJ slams critics”.

“People often ask what is the criteria for people being appointed to the Bench?

“I have been chastised for expressing my irritation at what I consider to be unfair and uninformed criticism of the appointments. It is about us laying bare the process because we take a lot of trouble to find the best people. We are the only branch of government that has published and publicly articulated criteria for appointments. It is not to say the other two arms of the state (government, Parliament) do not have worthy and competent people,” he said.

Archie outlined some of the worthy traits of the prospective candidate, especially experience. He said the criteria were made public in a legal notice since April 13, 2000.

He said: “We declare publicly what we consider professional competence, legal knowledge and training, mature and objective judgment, communication skills, organisational skills and interest in developing the law. We consider the integrity, honesty, fairness, ethical standards, independence, commitment to public service, and temperament such as courtesy, humility, authority, social awareness, receptivity to ideas, ability to listen and reliability.”

He added: “Everyone of these candidates who has been sworn in has had previous experience as a judicial officer. Registrars are judicial officers. We look at length, nature of law practice, exposure to court practices and procedures, other public and community service, previous service in a judicial capacity, specialisation and any publication. It is no secret. Information is in the public domain.”

Criteria and seniority

Moving to seniority, he said: “It would apply as well to appointments from the ranks of the legal profession to the High Court Bench. The commission in its constitutional remit may appoint outstanding candidates within, or without the judiciary. While seniority is taken into account, it is not the only factor, nor is it a governing factor. You would have listened to the resumes. None better could have been found. They would have been required to provide references who would have given detailed descriptions in writing of why they feel they would have satisfied the criteria, circumstances under which they know them and the extent of their intellectual and analytical ability. Every applicant would have been required