

Bio for Justice Desiree Patricia Bernard O.R. C.C.H.

Madam Justice Desiree Bernard who holds a Bachelor of Laws degree with honours from the University of London, was appointed in 1980 the first female Judge of the Supreme Court of Guyana after practising as a lawyer in the civil jurisdiction of the courts. In 1992 she was appointed the first female Justice of the Court of Appeal, and in 1996 the first female Chief Justice of Guyana. In May 2001 she became Chancellor and Head of the Judiciary, and retired in 2005 to join the Caribbean Court of Justice as its sole female Judge. In March 2014 she retired from that position.

In 1982 Justice Bernard was selected to sit as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and served as Rapporteur and later Chairperson over a period of twelve years.

For her services in improving the status of women in Guyana Justice Bernard was awarded Guyana's third highest honour - The Cacique Crown of Honour, and later the second highest honour- The Order of Roraima for her services as Head of the Judiciary of Guyana.

Justice Bernard over the years has written extensively on the legal rights of women and children, and is regarded as an expert on gender issues, particularly violence against women. She has presented papers internationally on the impact of international human rights treaties on the rights of women and on the application of such treaties within the domestic judicial system. She has also written extensively on the administration of justice as well as on judicial issues including professional

conduct. Since the inauguration of the Caribbean Court of Justice, Justice Bernard has addressed groups about the Court and its relationship with the Caribbean Community Single Market.

In 2005, she was the recipient of the Caribbean Community's Triennial Award for Women for her contribution to women's affairs and the administration of justice and in 2007 was conferred with the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of the West Indies.

In 2013 she completed research on the Compatibility (or Controversy) of the Caribbean Court of Justice with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas under a research fellowship offered by the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in London, England.

In 2011 Justice Bernard was appointed a judge of the Administration Tribunal of the Inter-American Development Bank. She served as its Vice-President in 2014, and later as its President in 2015.

In March 2014 Justice Bernard retired as a Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice, and is now a Justice of Appeal of the Bermuda Court of Appeal.