

Historic Sitting – First All African-American Bench



On Wednesday, February 14, 2024, oral arguments before the Appellate Division, First Department were heard for the first time by an all African-American bench. The bench was comprised of Presiding Justice Dianne T. Renwick, Justice Troy K. Webber, Justice Tanya R. Kennedy, Justice Bahaati Pitt-Burke, and Justice Marsha D. Michael.

In her opening remarks, Presiding Justice Renwick noted that this historic event was fittingly taking place during Black History Month. She also paid tribute to the African American jurists who previously sat on the Court, and said, “This day would have been difficult to imagine even a generation ago.”

Presiding Justice Renwick continued, “It is fair to say that when this Court first opened its doors in 1896, most people would not have imagined that the Court would eventually be comprised of such a diverse bench, including judges of Black, Asian, and Latino descent.

“As we know, a judiciary that reflects the makeup of its citizenry not only gains legitimacy in the eyes of the people it is designed to serve, but it also leads to better decision making where various perspectives can be considered in every adjudication. As Maya Angelou wrote, ‘We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color.’”

To view a video recording of the arguments, please [click here](#).



(From left to right: Justice Bahaati Pitt-Burke, Justice Troy K. Webber, Presiding Justice Dianne T. Renwick, Justice Tanya R. Kennedy, and Justice Marsha D. Michael.)