

# SPOTLIGHT ON: BLACK HISTORY MONTH

#ActionNotWords

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*For #BlackHistoryMonth2022, Christianah Babajide, Chambers Marketing Executive, speaks to Elaine Banton, Barrister at 7BR, about her journey to the Bar.*





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Q

What inspired you to become a barrister?



A

I decided to be a barrister when I was seven years old. A bright, sensitive child, I was inspired by the injustice I saw around me, growing up in a challenging environment. Until I was 13, I grew up on a Hackney Council estate in a single-parent (divorced) family with a hard-working mother who encouraged me to believe that I could achieve beyond my circumstances. My mother was a nurse, a rousing orator, who backed industrial action for better working terms and conditions. By the time I was 14, I had already successfully appealed my mother's regarding as a nurse to her rightful, more senior grade. I did the same for her colleagues with similar issues. Those were effectively my first employment law wins and I never looked back.





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Q

As a Black woman, what are your challenges?



A

The statistics (such as those contained within the Bar Council's Race Report of 2021), demonstrate that black female barristers are the most bullied, the least likely to progress and earn the least. Whilst this is a bleak picture, I let my work and my results speak for themselves. I'm also grateful and positive about the opportunities I have to consistently appear in many serious, complex, high profile, and impactful cases. We still rise!





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How can the Bar tackle diversity issues?



A strong Bar is one that is reflective of all of the rich talent within society. There are many exciting initiatives now afoot within the profession, as there is an awareness and intention piqued which is required for meaningful change. I am optimistic that anecdotally, there are good signs that with increased discussion, training and positive action initiatives being adopted and proliferated in many quarters, issues of equality are being embedded. This vitally important process will in turn engender improvements across access, retention and progression of underrepresented groups and culture change at the Bar and within the judiciary in years to come. This endeavour requires monitoring and adaptation as progress cannot be taken for granted.





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Q

If you could speak to your younger self today, what would you say?



A

Take all the opportunities offered to you.

PUSH - Persist Until Something (good) Happens.

Believe!