



## **NAWJ Board Meeting – September 17, 2021**

### **Annual Report from District 4 (District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia)**

#### **Honorable Anita Josey-Herring**

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#### **February 2021**

- On February 10, 2021, District 4 held a virtual happy for its members. In addition to seeing everyone virtually, we encouraged discussions addressing how the pandemic affected the judges professionally and personally, their Courts, and how the judges managed to convert court processes and systems to accommodate virtual or hybrid hearings. It was wonderful catching up with the District 4 members. Thank you to Judges Julia Weatherly and Rupa Ranga Puttagunta for putting this happy hour together!
- Beginning February 1, 2021, in honor of Black History Month, District 4 invited all NAWJ members to join us in participating in the “21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge” hosted by the American Bar Association. The Challenge invites participants to complete a syllabus of 21 short assignments, over 21 consecutive days that include readings, videos or podcasts. It has been intentionally crafted to focus on the Black American experience. The goal of the Challenge was to assist each of us to become more aware, compassionate, constructive, and engaged people in the quest for racial equity.
- District 4 worked with the D.C. Department of Corrections (DOC) to finalize a Women in Prisons Program event that will provide incarcerated women at the D.C. Jail an opportunity to write poems to their children. These poems were to be shared by these mothers with NAWJ members of District 4 in a virtual format. The goal of this event was to increase communication between women and their children during the period of their incarceration. Judges Josey-Herring and D’Souza led out on this event.

#### **April 2021**

- District 4 has had many new members join our ranks in the month of April. We were excited to welcome these new members and sent out welcome letters as well.
- District 4 will also began seeking volunteers for Officer positions for the next term.
- District 4 partnered with DOC to launch its D.C. Empowerment Series for Women Residents of DOC in June 2021. The Empowerment Series is designed as a monthly

podcast and includes participants who are women residents of DOC, judges, attorneys, and other professionals. The goal of the Empowerment Series is to provide information and tools to assist women residents of DOC in living as sustainable members of the community, to connect residents with fellow members from different walks of life throughout the larger D.C. community, and to discuss shared experiences.

- The planning committee for this discussion series includes: Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring; Chief Judge Erika L. Pierson Judge Gwenlynn D'Souza; Judge Sharon Goodie; Judge Tanya Jones Bosier; Quincy Booth, DOC Director; Michele Wilson, DOC Attorney Advisor; Dr. Amy Lopez, DOC College and Career Readiness. Additionally, themes for early sessions were drawn from the residents' suggestions.
- DOC produces, hosts, uses their technical resources and personnel, and finishes the final program files, which are then made accessible to the female residents via podcasts on their portable tablets. Handouts and other session supplements may be loaded to DOC's online resources and also made available for residents on their tablets.
- To facilitate these podcasts, NAWJ will provide judges and/or other experts to speak on a recommended topic and residents will provide interviewers/moderators to voice their interests during the session recordings. Session length will vary between 60 and 90 minutes.

### **May 2021**

- In May 2021, the planning Committee for the D.C. Empowerment Series for Women Residents of DOC previewed the Empowerment Series as an intro to the D.C. Courts Law Day video of Chief Judge Josey-Herring's interview with an emerging leader, Yasmine Arrington, on the Rule of Law. Yasmine Arrington produces and host her own radio show and podcast "Millennial Minds."
- Judges Josey-Herring, Clarke, and Goodie were planning NAWJ's 16th Annual Meeting with the Congressional Women's Caucus. This year's meeting theme was *Reimagining Access to Justice, Post Pandemic*.

### **June 2021**

- On June 16, 2021, the D.C. Empowerment Series for Women Residents of DOC recorded its podcast, titled 'Returning Home: Domestic Violence.'
  - Judge Bosier Jones moderated the June 16, 5:00 pm panel session which included speakers Tracy Davis, Managing Attorney at Bread for the City, Roseline Guest, Assistant Attorney General in the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia' Domestic Violence & Special Victims Section, and Michelle Palmer, Executive Director and Licensed Clinical Social Worker at the Wendt Center for Loss and Healing.
  - The podcast discussion was a great success and well received by DOC residents. Thank you to Judges Jones Bosier and Goodie for spearheading planning for this session

## July 2021

- July 9, 2021, District 4 hosted the NAWJ's 16th Annual Meeting with the Congressional Women's Caucus, *Reimagining Access to Justice: Post Pandemic*. The goal of the Annual Meeting was to address what the nation learned from the pandemic including the nature of the Digital Divide, Lifting Moratoriums, Women in Prison and Criminal Justice Reform, and how to improve Access to Justice. Thank you to our wonderful planning committee and speakers for putting together such a successful event.
  - Chief Judge Josey-Herring moderated the event. Speakers included: Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence; Judge Karen Donohue, NAWJ President; Judge Elizabeth Allen White; Judge Sharon Goodie; Chief Judge Brenda Murray; Jonathan Smith, Executive Director of the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs; Eric Angel, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia; and Gigi Sohn, Distinguished Fellow at Georgetown Law's Institute for Technology Law & Policy.
  - Committee members included: Judge Toni Clarke, Co-Chair; Chief Judge Anita Josey-Herring, Co-Chair; Judge Ann Breen-Greco, Member; and Judge Sharon Goodie, Member.

## Upcoming Events and Plans for District 4:

- The Maryland Women Moving Forward Conference has been tentatively scheduled for October 23, 2021. The Conference will be an all-day event at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women ("MCIW") located in Jessup, Maryland.
  - Judges Weatherly and Serrette are working hard to plan this event.
  - WCIW has indicated that it has not yet eased restrictions on visitors and programs inside the facility due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and/or other variants of the virus. Therefore, the planning committee is considering a virtual conference or any other event that could support the women residents' successful reentry into their community.
  - The goal of the conference is to provide women who are within 6 to 9 months of release with resources and information necessary to support their successful return to the community. In addition to workshops, the conference includes a keynote and/or motivational speaker, a plenary session of formerly incarcerated women who have successfully transitioned home, a business attire fashion show, lunch, and a resource fair.
- In February 2021, The Irma Raker Dinner for NAWJ's Maryland Chapter and the Maryland Women's Legislative Caucus was cancelled due to the pandemic and the Maryland legislators struggle to complete its work virtually. But the Women Legislators' Caucus conveyed their hope and intention to resume the tradition of meeting with the women judges to share and support issues of mutual interest next year.
- D.C. Empowerment Series for Women Residents of DOC Podcast Topics:
  - October 2021- Accessing Food Stamps/ Medicaid. Judge Goodie is confirming the availability of the Department of Human Services Policy Analyst Jodie Spurlock and Legal Aid attorney Aida Fitzgerald

- Confirmed Host/Speaker: Judge Goodie
  - November 2021- Your Rights: Equal Pay/ Fair Criminal Record Screening Amendment Act.
    - Confirmed Host/Speaker: Judge D'Souza and Judge Pierson
  - December 2021- Best Foot Forward: The Reentry Job Search. Judge Josey-Herring is confirming with the District of Columbia Reentry Action Network and Judge D'Souza is confirming with the Department of Employment Services to see whether they will be able to participate.
- Plans for Future Women in Prison Podcasts:
  - December 2021 Planning Meeting to discuss future podcasts in 2022.
  - January 2021 and February 2021 podcasts: The planning committee will decide whether to address mental health and wellness as a part of programming for 2022 podcasts.