

IN RE: THE PETITION OF SAMUEL K. BELLEH, MOUSA DASSAMA, P.
NYENAWELIE GIBSON, J. JOHNNY MOMOH, WEAH WISSEH and GEORGE SMITH,
Attorneys-At-Law, for Admission to the Supreme Court Bar as Counsellors-At-Law.

In re Belleh et al [2000] LRSC 16; 40 LLR 157 (2000) (21 July 2000)

Heard: June 30, 2000. Decided: July 21, 2000.

Chapter 17, section 17.6, of the New Judiciary Law of Liberia, Revised Code 17, enacted in 1972, provides that "any attorney who has been actively engaged in the practice of law for three (3) years may submit a petition to the Supreme Court showing his moral and professional qualifications for membership in the Bar of the Supreme Court and praying admission as a counsellor of that Court".

In pursuant to the above quoted statutory provision, the petitioners herein, attorneys-at-law, petitioned this Honourable Court during its March Term, A. D. 2000, praying for admission to the Supreme Court Bar as counsellors-at-law.

The petitioners alleged in their petitions that they are graduates of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia, and that they were admitted to the Liberian National Bar Association and actively practiced law at least three years before various courts and other administrative tribunals within the Republic of Liberia, and that they are citizens of the Republic of Liberia of good moral and professional character.

This Court heard the reading of the petitioners' petitions pursuant to its customs and tradition hoary with age in this jurisdiction, and allowed them to be examined by a Board of Examiners. The Chief Justice of the Honourable Supreme Court of Liberia, Her Honour Gloria M. Musu-Scott, accordingly appointed two (2) committees, in accordance with the requirements of the statute, to examine the moral and ethical conduct and professional qualifications of the candidates for membership to the Supreme Court Bar.

The composition of the two committees was as follows:

A. EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

1. Counsellor Benedict F. Sannoh.....Chairman
2. " Ishmael P. Campbell Member
3. " David A. B. Jallah Member
4. " Sie-A Nyene Youh..... Member

B. MORAL AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

1. Counsellor Frederick D. Cherue.....Chairman
2. Jeanette Ebba-Davidson Member
3. J. D. Baryogar Junius Member

4. Amy-Musu Jones Member

We received the reports from both the Moral and Ethics Committee and the Examination Committee. The report of the Examination Committee showed that the petitioners were duly examined and that five of the six candidates successfully qualified to practice before this Honourable Court. They are as follows:

1. Nyenawelie Gibson
2. Johnny Momoh
3. George Smith
4. Musa Dassama
5. Weah Wisseh

This Court recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the members of both committees for the services rendered this Honourable Court in spite of their volume of work and busy schedule. It is our hope and expectation that the long existing cordial relationship existing between this Court and the National Bar Association will be further cemented in the years ahead.

The legal profession is a noble profession which has its own requirements, good moral and ethical standards pursuant to the statute governing the practice of the legal profession in this jurisdiction. The Judiciary Branch of Government should be made up of noble men and women with sound legal education and that they should be of good moral and ethical standards in the administration of transparent justice in this Republic. We wish to emphasize again that lawyers practicing before our courts are major components of a credible judiciary in this Republic. This Court therefore disfavors any display of professional misconduct, legal malpractice and indecent conduct, or acts that tend to discredit the reliability and credibility of the Judicial Branch of Government which holds the democratic ideals of this country.

It is the duty of lawyers practicing before this Court and other subordinate courts not to initiate or otherwise participate directly or indirectly, in any act that tends to undermine the authority, dignity and integrity of our courts and the judges and Justices thereof who are involved in the effective administration of justice in our beloved nation. It therefore follows that it is encumbered upon our lawyers to maintain a respectful attitude towards our courts, and the judges and justices thereof in maintaining the supreme importance of their judicial offices. Lawyers also owe a duty to their clients. A lawyer is obliged to obtain full knowledge of his client's cause before advising thereon, and he is duty bound to give such client his legal opinion of the merits and probable outcome of pending or contemplated litigation. Also, a lawyer should advise his client to avoid or to end litigation, if the controversy will not permit of a fair judgment. It is indeed unprofessional for a lawyer practicing in our jurisdiction to advise the institution or the continuation of an unmeritorious suit or action.

At this junction, we urge you to continue to be lawyers of good moral and ethical character and to uphold the dignity and integrity of this Court and our subordinate courts. It is also our hope and expectation that the admitted candidates will live up to the oaths to be administered hereafter, and that they shall endeavor at all times to be honourable and diligent counsellors

of this Honourable Court and the subordinate courts for the enhancement and promotion of the administration of justice in this jurisdiction.

The Court carefully scrutinized and reviewed the qualifications of the petitioners pursuant to the statute, and determined that five of the six candidates are qualified for admission to the Supreme Court Bar as follows

1. P. Nyenawelie Gibson
2. J. Johnny Momoh
3. George Smith
4. Musa Dassama
5. Weah Wisseh

In the case *In re Weah*, the Supreme Court held that "not only are lawyers required by the Supreme Court to be professionally qualified, but they are also held to a high standard of ethical conduct." [\[1971\] LRSC 98](#); [20 LLR 535](#), Syl. 3, text at 538 (1971). Therefore, the moral and ethical conduct of our lawyers practicing before our courts in this jurisdiction is an important and necessary part of a healthy judicial system. This Court does not only insist upon lawyers with proper legal education, but also insist upon lawyers with clean moral records and upright ethical behavior. Only by these demands, which we can hope to maintain, will the judiciary command or demand respect at home and abroad.

Wherefore, and in view of the foregoing, it our considered opinion that the petitions of the above-named attorneys-at-law should be, and the same are hereby granted. The Clerk of this Court is hereby ordered to issue to each person named herein-above a certificate with the signatures of the Chief Justice and each of the Associate Justices affixed thereon certifying that the petitioners have been certified to practice law before the Honourable Supreme Court of Liberia. The Chief Justice on behalf of the Court shall administer the oath of admission to the candidates as stated supra. And it is hereby so ordered.

Petitions granted.