

In Re: The Petitions of ALEXANDER ATTIA, ALEXANDER BRYANT, EMMANUEL MABANDE, EMERY PAYE, FOMBA SHERIFF, PAUL GUAH, AND SIKAJIPO WOLLOR, Attorneys-At-Law for Admission to the
Supreme Court Bar as Counsellors-At-Law

PETITIONS OF ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW FOR ADMISSION TO THE
SUPREME COURT BAR AS COUNSELLORS-AT-LAW.

Heard: May 20, 1999. Decided: December 17, 1999.

MR. JUSTICE SACKOR delivered the opinion of the Court.

Every profession has its own requirements; some of which are good moral and ethical standards as prescribed by statute. The legal profession is one of the professions which has its own requirements; and one of these is good moral and ethical standards as set forth by our statute governing the practice of the legal profession in this jurisdiction.

Firstly, the statute provides that a person can be admitted to the legal bar as an attorney-at-law upon successful completion of the study of law at a qualified law school. By that statute, the apprenticeship system for the training of lawyers was abolished in our jurisdiction. Secondly, it is also provided by law 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 for admission as a Counsellor of this Court. Judiciary Law, Rev. Code §17:17.6.

We shall now briefly state the basis of petitioners' petitions before this Court.

The petitioners herein, attorneys-at-law, petitioned this Court during its October Term, A. D. 1999, for admission to the Supreme Court Bar as counsellors-at-law. Petitioners averred in their petitions that they, except one of them, are graduates of the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia. The petitioner with the exception was trained under the apprenticeship system and admitted to the bar in 1970 as an attorney-at-law.

Petitioners averred that they were admitted to the legal bars of Montserrado County and Cape Mount County and that since their respective admissions, they have actively practiced law for at least three years before various courts and other tribunals within the Republic. All the petitioners also averred that they are citizens of the Republic of Liberia and are of good moral and professional character.

This Court, pursuant to its customs and tradition hoary with age in this jurisdiction, heard the reading of the petitions and permitted petitioners to sit an examination of the Board of Examiners. The Chief Justice, Her Honour Gloria M. Musu-Scott, appointed two committees, pursuant to statute, to examine the moral and ethical conduct, and professional qualifications of the petitioners for membership to the Supreme Court Bar.

Composition of the two committees are as follows:

A. EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

- 1.Cllr. Frances Johnson- Morris Chairperson
- 2.Cllr. Marcus R. Jones Member
- 3.Cllr. Francis S. Korkpor Member
- 4.Cllr. F. Musa Dean, Jr. Member

B. MORAL AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

- 1.Cllr. Wheatonia Y. Dixon-Barnes Chairman
- 2.Cllr. Frederick D. Cherue Member
- 3.Cllr. Jonathan Williams Member
- 4.Cllr. Stephen Dunbar Member
- 5.Cllr. Felecia V. Coleman Member

The Moral and Ethics Committee indicated that one of the candidates, Attorney Alexander Bryant, who is presently out of the country did not sit for the interview conducted by said committee. He is therefor required to appear before the Moral and Ethics Committee after which he will be qualified for admission to the Supreme Court Bar.

As to the other petitioners, this Court first recognizes and appreciates the efforts of the members of both committees, who in the face of their volume of work and busy schedules, rendered services to this Court. It is our fervent hope and expectation that the fraternal relationship subsisting between this Court and the National Bar Association will be further continued in the new millennium.

Article 65 of the Constitution provides that the judicial power of the Republic is vested in the Supreme Court of Liberia and subordinate courts as may be established by the Legislature. Thus, the Judicial Branch, the third Branch of Government, should be made up of noble men and women, who have sound legal education and

are of good moral and ethical character for the dispensation of justice and for reflecting a reliable legal and judicial system in our beloved country. Lawyers play a vital role in the administration of justice; and as such, they are the pillars of a creditable judiciary in our nation. This Court therefore looks with disfavor on any lawyer who is guilty of professional misconduct, legal malpractice and any other indecent conduct or act that will discredit the reliability and credibility of the Judiciary. It is the Judiciary, which holds the democratic ideals of any civilized nation, including this country.

At this juncture, we therefore urge you to continue to be lawyers of good moral and ethical character and to uphold the dignity and integrity of this Court and the subordinate courts. It is also our hope and expectation that the admitted candidates shall live up to their oaths to be administered hereafter, and shall endeavor to be honorable and diligent counselors of this Court as well as our subordinate courts in enhancing and promoting the administration of justice in this jurisdiction.

This Court carefully reviewed the qualifications of the petitioners pursuant to statute, and in its discretion unanimously concluded that all the candidates, with the exception of Attorney Alexander Bryant who did not sit to the examination administered by the Moral and Ethics Committee for reason stated *supra*, have met all the requirements for admission as counsellors of the Supreme Court Bar, and they should accordingly be so admitted.

The petitioners who are so qualified and eligible for admission and are hereby ordered admitted as counsellors of the Supreme Court Bar are, as follows:

1. Alexander Attia
2. Emmanuel Mabande
3. Emery Paye
4. Fomba Sheriff
5. Paul N. Guah
6. Sikajipo Wollor

WHEREFORE, and in view of the foregoing, it is 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 a Certificate with the signatures of the Chief Justice and Associate Justices affixed thereon, certifying that the above-named petitioners have been certified to practice law before the Honourable Supreme Court of Liberia. Further, the Chief

Justice on behalf of the Court shall administer the oath of admission to the petitioners. And it is hereby so ordered.

Petition granted.