

High Court Judge Fiona Mwale joins elite list of Kamuzu Academy Sports Day guests of honour

9th May 2019



Justice Fiona Mwale

By Duncan Mlanjira

[...] In her reaction to the invitation, Justice Mwale, herself an alumna of Kamuzu Academy, said she was very ready to be present at the function.

“This was the easiest invitation I have had to positively respond to, as an active member of the KA Alumni Association, and giving back to my alma mater is very important to me.

“It is an immense honour and a very humbling experience. As a student, I recall a number of important dignitaries gracing these functions and looked up to them in awe for their credentials and eminence. It never occurred to me that one day I would share in that honour.

“Knowing how the students look up to such guests puts great pressure on me to live up to the honour bestowed and I hope to meet the challenge and inspire them, especially the girls.

“During my days at KA, I participated in short distance running, that is 100m and 200m as well as the high jump. In those days we only had two girls houses and I only ever managed to come third each time.

“The day evokes a lot of memories. Though I never received any sporting honours, I do recall being awarded the McLeod Cup for Academic Merit which is awarded to the best student in the year before sitting for A Levels. Very few female students received that award. I remember the joy I felt walking up the steps to receive the cup as though it were yesterday.”

When she left KA, Justice Mwale proceeded to the University of Leeds in England where she obtained her Bachelors degree in Law. she then immediately completed the Bar Vocational Course at Nottingham Law School and was called to the Bar of England and Wales by the Honourable Society of Gray’s Inn in London.



Justice Mwale

“I wanted to stay on in England as I was awarded a scholarship by the University of Birmingham to do a Masters degree and PhD. I am grateful for the wisdom of my father who told me I had to come home and apply the knowledge I had acquired or I would end up being a perpetual student.

“I came home and because I had acquired my Law training outside Malawi, I had to either work for Government for a year or sit the Malawi Bar Exams before I could be called to the Malawi Bar. My father prevailed on me to work for Government so I could get a lot of experience and I did.

“After two years in Government (Ministry of Justice), I was awarded a Beit Trust Scholarship which took me to the University of Warwick where I obtained a Masters degree in Law in Development. I then moved from the civil service into the public service as a law reformer with the Malawi Law Commission.

“After about 8 years with the Commission I landed a job with the SADC Tribunal, which was at the time based in Namibia. It was during my term at the Tribunal that I was appointed a judge of the High Court of Malawi and I returned home in 2012.

“I have therefore been a judge for 7 years now. The most exciting thing about joining the bench was that I would be joining a good friend and fellow alumnus, Justice Chifundo Kachale, who was the youngest judge at the time.”

She said there are many highlights during her tenure but one that come very close to her heart and will forever cherish is that of chairperson of the Child Case Review Board, a position provided for under the Child Care Protection and Justice Act with overall supervision over all matters concerning children.

“During this time, I travelled across the width and breadth of the country looking into the plight of children with regard to court cases, child protection, care of children in orphanages and oversaw adoptions.

“A lot of positive changes happened in child protection that I am very proud to have either pioneered or been part of. Another highlight has been my recent award of the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship which I held at the Washington College of Law, American University for 2017 / 2018.

“During this time I was able to meet other judges, legal experts and juvenile justice legal practitioners in a programme aimed at developing me professionally. I was also able to serve in that time as a Judicial Training Expert for the International Association of Women Judges based in Washington DC and developed curricula to be used in training judges all over the world on gender based violence sensitivity.”

Justice Mwale joins 10 other female judges at present. One female judge is in the Supreme Court of Appeal and the 9 in the High Court, Mwale and Justice Dorothy De Gabriele, both KA alumnae.

The other lady judges are Justice of Appeal Dr Jane Ansah SC of the Supreme Court and the Malawi Electoral Commission chairperson, Justice Esme Chombo who is just concluding cases as she is now retired, Justices Ivy Kamanga, Rachel Sikwese, Dorothy NyaKaunda Kamanga, Annabel Mtalimanja, Zione Ntaba and Ruth Chinangwa.