

# NEWSLETTER

COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF LEGAL EXCELLENCE, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND  
INCREASED MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW

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## JFB Board of Directors

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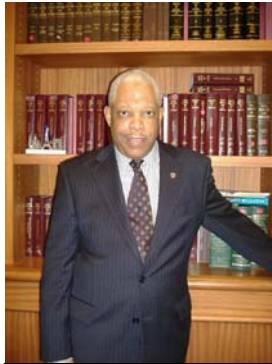
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



**Judge Hassan El-Amin**

### We Need More Black Judges

It's April now and mirroring the open "madness" of March's NCAA quest for glory are the quiet but fierce behind-the-scenes campaigns for Maryland judicial appointments.

As the celebrated basketball tournament and the Maryland legislative session both grind down to their final hours, the scramble for judicial appointments is getting into high gear. Back room chats, closed door meetings, bar events and gatherings, impromptu and deliberate hallway encounters, lunch meetings, letters on impressive stationery, telephone and e-mail exchanges all provide opportunities to vet and to politic. In Prince George's County, the race is on for two positions on the District Court and for the unannounced circuit court vacancy created by the retirement of **Judge Richard Sothoron**. Montgomery County sports two circuit court vacancies created by the retirements of **Judges DeLawrence Beard and Ann N. Sundt**. In the 3rd and 7th Appellate Circuits, competition is heating up for appointment to the Court of Special Appeals and the Court of Appeals, respectively, and two more high-level vacancies are on the way.

Unlike partisan campaigns for elective office, judicial campaigns take place largely out of public sight—but they are every bit as intense. The process is primarily appointive, not elective, and because most of the maneuvering is out of sight, popular opinion and accountability to the electorate are seldom critical factors in the selection of judges. Beneath the veneer of civility and political correctness, judicial aspirants, their supporters and detractors scramble feverishly for the attention of members of local judicial nomination commissions, legislators, business and civic leaders, and the Governor himself. The prizes: judgeships, with their lifetime security, prestige and ability to wield enormous power. Like closely guarded pearls, they are treasured and bestowed upon a select few.

Small wonder, then, that those who have historically been in control of these prizes manipulate the process to remain in control. Why do otherwise? The fact is, that, as with practically every other field of endeavor in American society in the wake of centuries of discriminatory practices and policies, white males enjoy a tremendous head start in the competition for judicial vacancies. From its inception, the J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association—named in honor of the first black judge to be appointed to the District Court for Prince George's County (and that

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK (Cont.)

only in 1971, a mere 37 years ago)—has publicly and forcefully advocated for the appointment and elevation of African Americans to the Bench. Thanks in no small measure to organizations such as Bourne and the Monumental City Bar Association, a great deal of progress has been made in the area of judicial appointments. Indeed, the head of the entire Maryland Judiciary, **Chief Judge Robert M. Bell**, a proud and socially conscious African American, and his colleague on the Court of Appeals, the **Honorable Clayton Greene, Jr.**, are beneficiaries of this activist tradition.

But current trends and history itself remind us that we must be ever vigilant and active against the “natural” trend to revert to the exclusionary practices of the past via the “good ol’ boys” networks, a trend visible in Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties (and throughout the State of Maryland, generally).

Consider these demographics: The Prince George’s County judiciary is presently comprised of 23 Circuit Court and 15 District Court judicial positions. The most recent census for Prince Georges’ County places the African American population at 66%.

- Of the 23 Circuit Court judicial positions, 10 (43%) are held by African-Americans.
- Of the 15 District Court judicial positions, 4 (27%) are held by African Americans.

Two positions on the District Court formerly held by African Americans are presently vacant.

If both these positions are filled by African Americans, the level on the District Court would increase to 6 (40%), still more than 20% below a representative number. One outrageous statistic is that **no African American males have been appointed to either Circuit or District Court in Prince George’s County since September 2000**, although qualified African-American males have been on the “short list”. This includes six (6) appointments to the District Court and eight (8) appointments to the Circuit Court.

The numbers for Montgomery County are even worse. **Chief Judge Beard’s** retirement from that circuit court leaves only one African American among the remaining 21 judges (4.8%). Only one African American (**Administrative Judge Eugene Wolfe**) serves on the District Court out of 11 judges (9%). This in a so-called “progressive” county whose chief executive officer is black and whose African American population is **16.8%**.

To help remedy these under-represented proportions, currently there are three African American candidates on the “short list” for Prince George’s County Circuit Court—all members of JFB: **Judges Krystal Alves, Hassan El-Amin, and Thurman Rhodes**. There are three black candidates on the “short list” for the District Court: Bourne members **Tiffany Hanna Anderson** and **Elveta M. Martin**, and soon-to-be member **Larry V. Hill**. In Montgomery County, four African Americans have applied for the circuit court, among them past **JFB President Sharon V. Burrell**, and current Public Relations Committee Chair **Venita M. Taylor**.

Please support these candidates! Meet with them and give them constructive criticism. Talk them up. Mention them to your colleagues. E-mail or call them and ask what you can do to assist them to get approved by their nominating commission and/or to get the Governor’s nod.

You don’t want to get involved? You want to remain on the sidelines? Just look at how bad things can get when we leave the competition to others: there are **NO** black judges in Charles County and only **ONE** in close-by Anne Arundel County!

Do we want to go back in time? If so, we should continue with the “business as usual” mode too many of us are now in. If not, we must become/remain aware and engaged. The hard-working members of JFB’s Judicial Nominating Committee, whom we hereby salute (they worked deep into several nights), provide good examples of the kind of involvement we need. But we cannot leave these judicial selections up to this committee alone. For example, we must hold our legislators partially accountable for the lack of proportionate representation in the judiciary. We also need to get the Lieutenant Governor more involved. After all, wouldn’t it be worth the effort to have more people who look like us, who share significant existential commonalities with us, presiding in the case(s) we argue? Or sitting in judgment of some of our feuding neighbors or our under-achieving, hard-headed clients and/or family members?

Respectfully submitted,

**Hon. Hassan Ali El-Amin  
President**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Apr. 5, 2008: Montgomery County Committee** will hold its next monthly meeting on Saturday, April 5, 2008, from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Breakfast will be served. For more info see page 4.

**Apr. 15 – 18, 2008: ANNUAL DRUG COURT DEFENSE COUNCIL TRAINING** sponsored by the National Drug Court Institute. Join the NDCI for a 3 ½ day on-site training program and learn about: The Role of the Defense Attorney in Drug Court; Ethical Considerations in Drug Court; Legal Issues/Due Process; Treatment Issues; Policy Considerations; *and much more!* For additional information contact Bobbie Taylor at 703.575.9400, ext. 16 or [btaylor@ndci.org](mailto:btaylor@ndci.org).

**Apr. 16, 2008: Honoring Women 3:30pm – 5:00 pm.** Monumental teams with the American Bar Association and multiple sponsors to present a panel discussion entitled "**Women of Color in the Legal Profession: Why It Means Success for Everyone,**" at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, 400 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington D.C.

**Apr. 17, 2008: General Membership Meeting featuring "THE PREPARATION OF A PERSONAL INJURY CASE,"** JFB-sponsored CLE program at CoCo Cabana Bar and Grill\_2031 A University Blvd, Hyattsville, MD 20783, 301.431.1882.

**Apr. 26 2008, Christmas in April.** Contact Maurine Epps Webb at 301.952.3644.

**May 2, 2008: ART IS UNIVERSAL** is the theme of the art show co-sponsored by JFB. The Gala Celebration Reception and Preview will be on Friday, May 2, 2008, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The "Everything Is Art" Interactive Show will be on Saturday, May 3, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The events are free to attend and everyone is invited. All events: Bolger Center, 9600 Newbridge Drive, Potomac, Maryland.

**Jun. 2, 2008: JFB SCHOLARSHIP GOLF TOURNAMENT & CLINIC** Co-Sponsored with PGCB, \$125 per person. \$400 per foursome. Contact Judge Toni Clarke at 301.952.4988.

**Jul. 26 –Aug. 2, 2008: NBA 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention & Exhibits**  
[http://www.nationalbar.org/news/conferences/83rd\\_reg\\_form.shtml](http://www.nationalbar.org/news/conferences/83rd_reg_form.shtml)

**MSBA Calendar of Events:** <http://www.msba.org/calendar/default.asp>

## JFB CO-FOUNDER HAMILTON HONORED



On February 5, 2008 **Samuel C. Hamilton**, a co-founder of the J. Franklyn Bar Association, was given a Special Award of Recognition as the first African American Attorney in the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. The award was presented to Mr. Hamilton at a Bar Association for Montgomery County Luncheon by **John McCarthy**, the current Montgomery County State's Attorney. The Bar Luncheon was dedicated to Mr. Hamilton. **Judge Andrew L. Sonner** (retired) was present at the luncheon. Judge Sonner, who was the State's Attorney for Montgomery County at the time Mr. Hamilton was hired, was instrumental in hiring Mr. Hamilton. Other notable attendees included **Judge Charles Day**, assistant State's Attorney **George Simms**, and several judges from the Montgomery Circuit and District Courts. Many of Mr. Hamilton's family members, colleagues, and former partners also attended the luncheon.



**J. FRANKLYN BOURNE BAR ASSOCIATION, INC.**

P.O. Box 1121

Upper Marlboro, MD 20773-1121

***Important Dates to Remember***

**JFB's Montgomery County Committee**

**Apr. 5, 2008** at 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  
Montgomery County Bar Association  
27 West Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD  
Holly Reed (301) 587-9480

**Apr. 17, 2008. JFB General Meeting**

**"THE PREPARATION OF A PERSONAL INJURY CASE"**  
CoCo Cabana Bar and Grill 2031 A University Blvd,  
Hyattsville, MD 20783, 301-431-1882.  
Buffet Dinner Included!  
Don't Miss Our New Meeting Format!

**Apr. 26 2008, Christmas in April**  
Contact Maurine Epps Webb at 301.952.3644

**ART IS UNIVERSAL**

**May 2, 2008**, 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.  
**May 3, 2008** 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Bolger Center, 9600 Newbridge Drive,  
Potomac, Maryland.  
Contact Marilyn Pierre, 310 279 9020

**SAVE THE DATE(S)**

**Jun. 2, 2008: JFB SCHOLARSHIP GOLF  
TOURNAMENT & CLINIC** Co-Sponsored with PGCBA,  
\$125 per person. \$400 per foursome.

***JFB LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION IN ANNAPOLIS, MARCH 18 2008***



***MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION — PLEASE MAIL 2008 DUES TODAY***



**JFB** is committed to legal excellence, community service, and the advancement of African-American minorities in the legal profession. Our membership consists primarily of African-American attorneys who live and/or work in Montgomery and Prince George's

Counties.

Membership classes are:

**Active:** Licensed to practice law in Maryland.  
Dues: admitted to the Bar for less than 5 years — \$25; all others — \$50.

**Associate:** Licensed in *any other jurisdiction*, who lives in Montgomery or Prince George's County.

Dues: admitted to the Bar for less than 5 years — \$25; all others — \$50.

**Student:** Matriculated at a Washington metropolitan area law school *or* lives in Montgomery or Prince George's County and matriculated in any law school. Dues: \$5.

**New Admittees:** Admitted to practice in Maryland in the last 12 months. Dues waived.

Due checks should be made payable to J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association, Inc. and mailed to P.O. Box 1121, Upper Marlboro, MD 20773.

For membership applications, please visit our website, [www.bournebar.org](http://www.bournebar.org), or contact Janelle Jordan & Judge Herman C. Dawson.