

Washington Lawyer

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Judge Blackburne-Rigsby Receives GWAC's Charlotte E. Ray Award

On February 4 the Greater Washington Area Chapter (GWAC) of the Women Lawyers Division of the National Bar Association and the GWAC Foundation, Inc. presented their 26th Annual Charlotte E. Ray Award to Judge Anna Blackburne-Rigsby of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.



“It’s clear to me why my friend and colleague . . . is being honored here this evening. She is certainly a worthy recipient of this award. Like Charlotte E. Ray, she is a trailblazer in her own right. She is one of the few African American women judges even today sitting on the court of last resort,” said Court of Appeals Chief Judge Eric Washington during his remarks.

Washington said Blackburne-Rigsby’s current role as president of the National Association of Women Judges is “just another example of her efforts to improve access to justice throughout this country.”

Blackburne-Rigsby said the award was a special honor as GWAC has been an important part of her personal and professional life since law school.

“It’s a very special privilege to be able to pay it forward. I am here on the shoulders of so many people who have mentored, guided, helped, assisted, counseled, and encouraged me, and I try to do it as much as I can with the law students and law clerks who work with me,” she said in accepting the award.

Ray was the first African American woman certified as a lawyer in the United States and the first woman admitted to practice in the District of Columbia. The award is given annually to an African American woman from the local bar who has demonstrated a strong commitment to community involvement, mentorship, advocacy, and excellence in the Washington metropolitan area.

Past honorees have included Kim M. Keenan, NAACP general counsel and former president of the D.C. Bar; Grace E. Speights, a partner at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP; and Natalie O. Ludaway, managing member of Leftwich & Ludaway, LLC.—K.A.