

# Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson

Nominee for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

*President Joe Biden announced his intent to nominate Ketanji Brown Jackson to the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit on March 30, 2021. If confirmed, Jackson will be only the third African American woman to ever serve on that court. President Biden has promised to prioritize demographic and professional diversity, and Ketanji Brown Jackson is a stellar first nominee to demonstrate that commitment. There is a dearth of African American women on the federal appellate bench, and it is long past time that we see more. The bench also needs more judges who, like Jackson, have experience as public defenders, have represented the most vulnerable members of our society, and have fought for the constitutional rights of all.*

## **Nominee Profile**

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson currently serves on the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. She was nominated to that court by President Barack Obama and the Senate unanimously confirmed her in March 2013.

## **Biography**

Judge Jackson was born in Washington, DC in 1970. Her parents were both public school teachers who moved the family to Miami, Florida, where Judge Jackson grew up. She graduated from Harvard-Radcliffe College in 1992 with an A.B., magna cum laude, in Government and earned her J.D., cum laude, from Harvard Law School, where she was a supervising editor of the Harvard Law Review. After law school, Judge Jackson clerked for three federal judges: Associate Justice Stephen G. Breyer of the Supreme Court of the United States, Judge Bruce M. Selya of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and Judge Patti B. Saris of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

## **Legal Experience**

After her first two clerkships, Judge Jackson worked as a litigation associate at Miller, Cassidy, Larroca & Lewin LLP, where her practice focused on civil subject matters such as commercial breach of contract, bankruptcy, and defense of corporate employment discrimination. After her final clerkship with Justice Breyer, Judge Jackson represented clients in criminal and civil appellate matters at Goodwin Procter LLP, including before the Supreme Court.

Judge Jackson returned to public service in 2003 as an Assistant Special Counsel for the U.S. Sentencing Commission and in 2009 President Obama elevated her to be the Commission's Vice Chair. Her appointment was

unanimously confirmed by the Senate. During her tenure, the Commission reduced the Sentencing Guidelines for crack cocaine and other drug-related offenses. Judge Jackson then served as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in the District of Columbia where she represented low-income criminal appellants before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Judge Jackson left the Federal Defender's Office in 2007 and spent three years as Of Counsel at Morrison & Foerster LLP. There, she worked on civil and criminal appellate cases in state and federal courts and was counsel of record on several amicus briefs to the Supreme Court.

During her eight years on the District Court for the District of Columbia, Judge Jackson has demonstrated a commitment to equal justice. For example, in *Pierce v. District of Columbia*, Judge Jackson held that prison officials had acted with "deliberate indifference" to a deaf inmate's need for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. In *Patterson v. United States*, Judge Jackson denied police officers' claims of qualified immunity for arresting and charging a protestor with disorderly conduct after he used profanity. And in *Make the Road New York v. McAleenan*, Judge Jackson issued a nationwide preliminary injunction to prevent President Trump's Department of Homeland Security from increasing "fast-track" deportations which do not require immigration court hearings. And, in a suit seeking to compel testimony before the House from Don McGahn, she ruled that McGahn could be required to testify.

Judge Brown has also had the opportunity to weigh in on behalf of workers' rights. In *AFGE, AFL-CIO v. Trump*, Judge Jackson overturned three Trump executive orders which limited the rights of federal employees to bargain collectively and engage with union representatives.

### **Professional and Academic Activities**

Judge Jackson is a member of the Judicial Conference Committee on Defender Services, the Harvard University Board of Overseers, and the Council of the American Law Institute. She also serves on the board of the United States Supreme Court Fellows Commission and the D.C. Circuit Historical Society. Through her work with the Historical Society, Judge Jackson serves as a judge for the Mock Court Program, which invites D.C. high school students to the federal court to argue First and Fourth Amendment cases.