

# **JUDICIAL ETHICS: AVOIDING PITFALLS**



BY  
**HON. JUSTICE MARSHAL UMUKORO,**  
CHIEF JUDGE/LIFE BENCHER,  
HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE,  
ASABA,  
DELTA STATE

BEING A PAPER DELIVERED AT THE 2021  
INDUCTION COURSE FOR NEWLY APPOINTED JUDGES/.KADIS  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ABUJA  
ON FRIDAY 21ST MAY, 2021

## JUDICIAL ETHICS; AVOIDING THE PITFALLS<sup>1</sup>

Ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. The word 'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos' which can mean custom, habit, character or disposition. Ethics therefore may include stipulated code of conduct for a person or group of persons.

A judicial officer is a person with the responsibilities and powers to facilitate, arbitrate, preside over, and make decisions and directions in regard to the application of the law. Judicial Ethics therefore concern the behaviour, character, and habit, of a judicial officer anywhere including in the courtroom, outside the courtroom and in his judgment writing.

Ethics may not be included in a written and published judicial code of conduct. A breach of the written code of conduct may constitute judicial misconduct and liability to discipline. On the other hand, Judicial Ethics principles are self-regulatory standards of conduct. This discussion on judicial ethics and code of conduct is of great relevant in a bid to promote judicial integrity.

*The activity of courts and judges requires the highest professional standards. In the constant endeavour to strike the right balance of competing interests, it is necessary for the modern judge to be wise, sensitive, and knowledgeable not only in legal matters but also in the spheres of economy, social security, sociology, psychology, etc. In addition to having the highest professional standards, judges must continuously follow scientific, social and economic developments. In times of globalization, judicial decision-making has become increasingly multifunctional and interdisciplinary. <sup>2</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Presented by Hon Justice M Umukoro, HCJ, Delta State at the NJI conference for newly appointed Judges/Kadis May 2021

<sup>2</sup> Judge Mindaugas Šimonis Judicial ethics are a prerequisite for the highest standards in the execution of justice to **UNODC** (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

It is common knowledge that a judicial officer's peers and the general public expect a high standard of conduct from him. When a judicial officer is in doubt as to whether a particular conduct may breach ethics and code of conduct, he is better off restraining himself from doing or exhibiting that act or conduct.

In judicial parlance, misconduct is any conduct that is prejudicial to the effective and expeditious administration of justice. Examples of misconduct whether as provided in the Code of Conduct or general ethics include using the judge's office to obtain special treatment for friends or relatives; accepting bribes, gifts, or other personal favours related to the judicial office; having improper discussions with parties or counsel for one side in a case; treating litigants or lawyers in a demonstrably egregious and hostile manner; violating other specific, mandatory standards of judicial conducts stated in the Code of Conduct for judicial officers, or performance of official duties if the conduct might have a prejudicial effect on the administration of the business of the courts among reasonable people.

As a guide and in order to assist judicial officers, especially newly appointed ones like your honourable selves in not falling into the pitfalls associated with certain conducts, the National Judicial Council publishes a code of conduct from time to time. The latest is the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria February 2016. The relevance of promoting judicial integrity can be seen from the preamble to the provisions of the said Code. The Preamble reads:

*The Nigerian Judiciary, as the Third Arm of Government under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes, accepts and affirms that:*

- *An independent, strong, respected and respectable judiciary is indispensable for the impartial administration of Justice in a democratic State.*

- *It is the duty of every Judicial Officer to actively participate in establishing, maintaining, enforcing, and himself observing a high standard of conduct that will ensure and preserve transparently, the integrity and respect for the independence of the Judiciary.*
- *The judicial duties of a Judicial Officer, which include all the duties of his office prescribed by law, take precedence over all his other activities.*
- *It is advisable that the standard of conduct, which a Judicial Officer is obliged to observe, be prescribed and published for the information of and due compliance by the Judicial Officer himself and the public in general so that the objectives set out in this Code of Conduct may be achieved.*

A violation of the rules contained in the Code as stated by the National Judicial Council will constitute judicial misconduct and will attract disciplinary action. When any judicial officer is found to have breached the Code of Conduct, he is liable to be warned, suspended, terminated or dismissed. The said judicial officer may also be punished by withdrawal of certain rights and privileges such as not putting himself forward for elevation or from performing any judicial function outside his court. He could also be censured, reprimanded and put on a 'watch list'. See Regulation 25 of the National Judicial Council Judicial Discipline Regulations 2017. Further embarrassment is assured by the publication in the newspapers of the names of those who have been found to have breached the rules in the Code.

From the above it is prudent for any judicial not only to be aware of ethics that obtain in the occupation but to strive to avoid the pitfalls which can lead to dire situations, including sanction or punishment or an embarrassment to the judiciary as a whole. There is a thin line between ethical breaches and code of conduct, either of which may constitute misconduct depending on the circumstances and extent of the breach. As stated in the Code, the provisions therein are

to serve as the minimum standard of conduct to be observed by every judicial officer. One cannot therefore say that the Code contains all the ethics expected to regulate the conduct of a judicial officer. Interestingly, though a particular conduct is unethical, one can escape sanction or negative consequences just because it is not one of those conducts specifically stated in the Rules in the Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers. Though such unwritten ethical misbehavior is not documented, such behavior will ridicule the profession and bring the occupation to disrepute.

There are basically three areas where the judicial officer ought to be careful not to breach rules of code of conduct or ethics.

#### 1. **IN THE COURTROOM**

In exercise of his duties in the courtroom, the judicial officer is expected to exercise restraint even in the face of temptation. He must also not act or say things that tend to give the impression he is favourable to one side or that he dislikes a party or counsel. It is not expected that the judge will engage in abusive words or engage in constant argument with counsel or witnesses. A judicial officer should be patient, dignified and courteous to counsel, litigants and witnesses. He should demand the same from the said individuals as well. See Rule 3.2 and 3.3 of the Code of Conduct. Though the judge has power to punish for contempt in its face, this power should be exercised with great caution. See Rule 6(d). It is advised that the judicial officer uses his pen and record all infractions in his record book instead of engaging in a 'war'. The judicial officer should exercise his discretion judicially and judiciously and must accord to every person before him, full right to be heard. Rule 3.7 of the Rules requires the judicial officer to promptly deal with cases and dispose of same. He must be diligent and not tardy. The custom is to start court proceedings at 9am. It is unethical not to keep to this timing without just cause. If for any reason, a judicial officer cannot

attend court or will be late, he must endeavour to instruct his staff to notify counsel at the earliest opportunity.

The judicial officer must always show positive verbal and non-verbal communication in the courtroom. With regards to non-verbal communication, he must avoid tardiness or engaging in long conversations on issues that have no bearing with the business of the court. See Rule 5. The courtroom is certainly not a venue for the judge to engage in public controversies. He should when appropriate make eye contact with counsel who is addressing court. He must show that he is listening and avoid too many interruptions.

Doctors advise that sitting for too long is detrimental to health; it is advisable to take short breaks. I recommend 10 or 20 minutes every one or two hours. A situation where too many breaks are taken and each break last more than 30 minutes is a non-verbal of sign of lack of seriousness on the part of the judicial officer to the business of the day. It is also a good habit to inform counsel how long the break will last for so they can be sure when the court will reconvene.

A judicial officer should disqualify or recuse himself in a proceeding in which his impartiality may genuinely, reasonably and objectively be questioned. The instances where these are possible are stated in See Rule 12. This is to further strengthen the confidence that the society has in the judiciary. Justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done.

## **2. IN PERFORMANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES**

In performing his administrative duties, the judge should be diligent. He must attend promptly to all matters placed before him in chambers. He must not give the administrative staff reasons to give unnecessary excuses to counsel. Any delay in dealing with administrative matters sends a negative non-verbal communication and impugns on the integrity of the judicial officer. It is better to promptly indicate any query on papers brought before you instead of allowing same to

suffer delay on your table. A rule of thumb is to ensure all files on your table are dealt with and dispatched before close of business each day. See Rule 11 which provide that

*A judicial officer should diligently discharge his administrative duties, maintain professional competence in judicial administration and facilitate the performance of the administrative duties of other judicial officers and court officials.'*

He should treat all court staff with respect and must avoid nepotism and favouritism. See Rule 11(iv). He must also avoid putting himself in a situation where he can be accused of sexual harassment; this being a trending issue nowadays.

### **3. OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM; Social, religious and community life.**

The life of a judicial officer may be boring socially but no matter the urge to continue with an active social life, after appointment, the judicial officer may have to minimize his social interaction. Forced isolation brought on by Covid 19 has shown that it is not impossible to limit social interactions. It is good to be with friends and family in times of joy and sorrow. It is also good, especially with the new order in health awareness for a judge to engage in private and public exercise or sports. It has been advised that to avoid pitfalls, it is better to have a home gym for exercise instead of belonging to gym clubs. A judge may also want to continue to his participation in church or mosque activities. He may even want to continue with some civic and charitable activities. He may want to continue to be a Boy or Girl Scout etc.

According to Rule 13, a judicial officer should regulate his extra-judicial activities to minimize the risk of conflict with his judicial duties. As stated in Rule 13, the major consideration is whether any vocational activity will adversely affect the dignity of his office or interfere with the performance of his

judicial duties. For example, no matter how important his community thinks he is to them, he must not accept any Chieftaincy title while in office. The judicial officer may also not act as administrator of an estate or trustee or other fiduciary relationship except for a member of his family. However, he must ensure that such duties do not interfere with the proper performance of his judicial duties. See Rule 13.3. The default position therefore is to, if in doubt, decline to so act. There is also the temptation to act as director in a family company where the judicial officer may own shares. Rule 13.4 prohibits the judicial officer from taking part in the day-to-day management of such company either as an officer, director manager or even adviser.

As explained in the NJI Code of Conduct, the bottom line is to avoid a relationship that tends to reflect adversely on judicial impartiality, interfere with the proper performance of judicial duties, exploit the judicial position or involve the judicial office in frequent transactions with legal practitioners or with people likely outcome before th judicial officer's court. A good example is not only been a shareholder of a boutique that manufactures or sells regulation suits or lawyers wigs and gowns, but being a director or signatory to the account of that business. What do you do if the company is sued or a lawyer complains about service and one of the shareholders in a bid to fend off litigation boast that you are a director of the company?

Attending parties is another area where the position of the judge may be questioned. We all know that it is unethical to spray money at celebrations on the celebrant. To avoid such pitfalls, a judicial officer, if he has to attend such parties, must sit quietly for a short period of time and hand over any gift as our custom demands, privately to the celebrant. It will be useful, if possible to advice that your donation or gift be not publicly acknowledged. In order to avoid these pitfalls, most judges prefer to attend a church service being part of the events lined up instead of attending the social aspect. If the judicial officer is the celebrant, to avoid unnecessary

attention, he should avoid public dancing with accompanying display of money showers in public.

### **Gifts**

In private or public, a judicial officer should not ask for or accept gifts or favors or even loans on account of anything done or omitted to be done by him in the discharge of his duties. This Code also binds members of judicial officer's family. Clearly such an action will impugn on the integrity of the judge. To avoid such pitfalls, which are unethical, and a breach of the code of conduct, the judicial officer must not place himself in a position where an impression is created that he has received a bribe. He must not allow litigants/counsel to visit his home or see him privately in his chambers. You can never know who is waiting and watching. The judicial officer should not put himself in a position where he is queried about his actions. He cannot be heard in future to deny that though private meetings were held, no gifts were exchanged. The following report comes to mind.

“Judicial Independence And Moral Responsibility  
Sunday Times, 9th January 1977.

A Birthday toast for a friend and a professional colleague looks a very natural affair. Nothing therefore looked more natural and welcome than when a High Court Judge held a brief toast for a lawyer, who was not only his “senior” at the CMS Grammar School but, also, has become a very senior member at the Bar.

Why then did this judicial conviviality, which was carried out with the best of intentions, provoke controversy in the court? The reasons were simple and unambiguous enough. Firstly, the toast was held in the Judge's Chambers. Secondly, it was held for one of the lawyers in the case over which he was presiding. But before we proceed in more detail, let us briefly recapture the background. The

Ahmaddiya Mission Case has aroused tremendous passion amongst members of the Mission. A measure of the depth of the cleavage within the Mission is that the matter ever got to court. The intricate issues involved in the case were being argued by two prominent lawyers: Chief Rotimi Williams SAN and Mr. G.O.K. Ajayi SAN. It was during one of these proceedings that Chief Rotimi Williams, the lawyer for the defence, announced that he would have liked to ask for an adjournment because it was his birthday; but he could not do this as he was in the middle of his address. The Judge probably took mental impression of this wistful desire of the Chief. After proceedings and still in the middle of the case, he decided to toast Chief Williams on his birthday. But he took the judicial precaution in inviting the lawyer for the plaintiffs, Mr. G.O.K. Ajayi. Besides, he invited other lawyers. An atmosphere as convivial and friendly as this was hardly one in which discussions about a pending case could be held. All these were apparently unknown by the plaintiffs, as their lawyer never deemed it necessary to inform them that a party to toast the lawyer for the opposing party was held in the Judge's Chambers. About a week later, the plaintiffs, having now heard about the party decided to raise a "complaint" to the Judge. Ironically, this complaint was to be made through their lawyer, Mr. Ajayi, who himself had been present at the toast. This was duly raised by him in the open court, after the Judge had declined his application that the complaint be heard in camera (i.e. in the Judge's Chambers).

As the Judge observed, "Since everything in respect of this case has always been said in the open court, there is no need to retire into the chambers for any complaint."

When it was later raised, the Judge could not hide his horror that a complaint could be raised on a

matter of such trifling significance as a toast for a worthy colleague.

For, he declared with obvious indignation: "I think the stage has been reached in the Judiciary of this country when ignorant and mischievous members of the public should be educated to realise that bonds of friendship between learned friends transcend the pettiness of their own minds."

Nevertheless, the Judge gave a full explanation of what transpired in his Chambers in order to demonstrate that everything done was in good faith. His Lordship's explanation was not contradicted by Mr. Ajayi, who himself was present at the toast.

It would appear that since there were no contradictions of His Lordship's account, the facts were indisputably accurate. Chief Rotimi Williams' account to the Daily Times has further reinforced this view.

Clearly, therefore, no improprieties were perpetrated, and none was alleged by the plaintiff. Nonetheless, the matter has raised controversy. The Nigerian Tribune has forcefully expressed the view that:

It would have been more appropriate for the Judge to congratulate the Chief in open court and to throw a party in honour at a different place and on a purely private occasion.

In the Tribune's view, for the Judge "to have called a 'toast party' in the midst of a case and inside the Judge's chambers was, at least, indiscreet. It should never have happened." In an apparent reply to the Judge's angry reaction against the "pettiness" of members of the public, the Tribune declared:

For justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done, even by ignorant and mischievous members of the public.

In my view, the whole issue raised in a fresh form the old problem of the moral responsibility of judges, particularly in their social dealings with the outside world of the Bench. Justice Candido Johnson acted in a state of enthusiasm and friendship and never intended his conduct to injure anybody's interest. Nonetheless, his amiability has provoked embarrassing controversy.

Traditionally, judges have always been subjected to a severe code of ethics, which borders on the ascetic. They are not to be too socially familiar; they are not to receive gifts indiscriminately; and their public utterances – if and when made – must be cautious, for otherwise they might be giving an opinion on a matter that might be coming before them for adjudication. These are very rigid rules that have the effect of socially ostracizing judges from the rest of the society.

The rationale is that judges are oracles. They are the final arbiter on matters of great moments, not only to individuals but, also, to the Nation. Consequently, they must be seen as beyond passions, so that when they give their verdicts, there should be no doubt that the pronouncement was that of an oracle. Their greatest virtue is public confidence. Any infraction of the unwritten rules that govern their lives would produce tremendous and unsavory public reactions.

Thus, when Dr. Elias, the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, and a scholar of unparalleled dimension, made the mistake of venturing into the affidavit controversy, his conduct received wholesale

condemnation and attack. The duties of judges are grave because they decide on matters of life and death, hence, the society expects from them a corresponding sense of moral obligation. They are the keepers of public conscience and virtue; hence, their paths are strewn with temptations.

For, as Sharswood, the great American Jurist, observed in Introduction to the American Code of Ethics.

There is perhaps no profession after that of the sacred ministry, in which a high-toned morality is more imperatively necessary than that of the law.

He continued:

There is certainly no profession in which so many temptations beset the path to serve from the lines of strict integrity: in which so many delicate and difficult questions of duty are constantly arising. There are pitfalls and mantraps at every step.

Concluded Sharswood:

Any indiscretion is frowned upon.

The late Mr. Justice Jibowu missed the Chief Justiceship of the Federation, which he richly deserved, because he happened to have written a private letter to his friend in which he made uncomplimentary political remarks. Although he was within his private legal rights in voicing his opinion privately to a friend, the letter, which later found its way to the banned NCNC's leadership, was used to discredit him for the post of Chief Justice. Mr. Justice Jibowu was not indiscreet; he was only unlucky.

Judges occupy a unique position in the political fortunes of a society. Nonetheless, they are not

expected to behave in deference or too much subservience to the political rulers. Such hobnobbing would make the public to lose interest and confidence in their judgements, however bonafide given.

This is why the Doctrine of Judicial Independence has become a university-acknowledged fundamental of our Common Law. Since the 15th Century, judges of the Common Law jurisdiction, to which we belong, have striven and won this independence from interference by rulers and powerful statesmen. No one can tell them how they should decide a case because they are essentially the servants of the law and not of men. Sometimes, judges dramatize this independence. The story has been told that some years ago, two judges went to Oxford in England to hold court sessions there. They dined at All Souls' College, and after dinner, the Warden proposed the health of the Queen. The junior Judge, who had only recently been appointed, stood up. The senior Judge pulled at his coat and said in a hoarse whisper: "Sit down, you fool, you are the Queen."

This independence of judges has become part of our priceless traditions. Judges must endeavor to disentangle themselves from influences and associations that undermine their independence before the public.

Mr. Justice Conrad Idowu Taylor, the late Chief Judge of Lagos State, and one of our most revered judges became a legend in his observance of judicial scruples.

To Mr. Justice Taylor, personality – however high and exalted – was never allowed any pre-eminence in the Temple of Justice. For example, while reading his judgements, nobody – not even lawyers – however

eminent was allowed into court. This was because he regarded such moments as solemn. No disturbance, however unintended, was allowed. On one occasion, Justice Taylor politely declined an invitation from the Governor of his State only on the ground that he was then about to hand out a judgement in his court in a case in which the government was a party. Justice Taylor was the quintessence of judicial scruples.

The Rotimi Williams' Toast Affair could be seen from this background. When Justice Johnson issued his reaction about the "pettiness" of the minds of the public, he was looking at the incident strictly from his own intelligent, erudite, self-assured and incorruptible standpoint. He momentarily ignored the public side, which though constantly and ignorantly critical, nonetheless provides the pivot upon which the judiciary rests. Justice must not appear to be compromised in any way, however unintentional.

It is a "cloistered virtue."

True, the public is "ignorant, mischievous and petty," as the Judge said, but it is these vices, these spontaneous critical and unthinking attitudes of the public, which produce the searchlight which sustains the Judiciary.

The Toast Affair has shown that judges cannot be too careful'<sup>3</sup>

The Code of Conduct permits a judicial officer to accept personal gifts or benefits from relatives or personal friends to such extent and on such occasions as recognised by custom. Note that the giver should be a relative or personal friend. So the question of receiving gifts from Government or

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Law and Contemporary Nigeria: Reflections By Dr Olu Onagoruwa', Dr Olu Onagoruwa, Inspired Communications, 2004, pp.123-125 (Being compilation of articles published by Dr. Onagoruwa in Daily Times)

from members of the bar generally during the burial of a close family member may land one in a pit. Rule 13.5 also allows a judicial officer to accept books supplied by publisher on a complimentary basis, a loan from the bank on regular course of business and on same terms generally available to the public or scholarship or fellowship on the same terms as other beneficiaries.

### **Relationship with other judicial officers**

The legal profession places a lot of importance on seniority. I believe it is the same with judicial officers whether or not they were appointed at the same time and most importantly if they meet one that is occupying the higher bench. Judges accord respect to fellow judges by their greetings and manner of speech. This display of respect is a non-verbal act and communication to the whole world that the judge should be accorded his due respect. To avoid falling into any pit, generally a judge should accord a fellow judge even of a lower bench visible due respect. This will strengthen the integrity of the judiciary.

### **Relationship with counsel**

To avoid pitfalls, ethics require that a judicial officer must clearly be mindful about the kind of relationship he has with counsel. It is not unethical to have a friend or relation who is a lawyer. It behooves on the judge in order to maintain the integrity of the judiciary to disqualify himself if there is a direct relationship with counsel involved in a case before him. See Rule 24, which provide that a judicial officer should disqualify himself in a proceeding in which his impartiality may genuinely and reasonably be questioned. No matter how much the judicial justifies the remoteness of the relationship, e.g they are just from same large family, once a party raises such objection, in order not to give any room for questioning his actions, he should disqualify himself. However, despite the remoteness of the relationship if the parties agree that despite that, the judicial officer may continue hearing the case. See Rule 12.2. I have seen situations where a judicial officer had disqualified himself based on the fact that he has

a fixed deposit in one of the parties who is a bank. That may seem extreme but every circumstance is different especially where the relationship can be said to be indirect.

To avoid any pitfalls, a judicial officer should avoid intensifying or forming new relationships with counsel. It is possible that though at first, the counsel is unlikely to appear before you, you will find that after many years on the bench, the possibility of that happening is not so remote. No one says one should not befriend lawyers; it is only advisable to disqualify oneself if the lawyer is involved in a matter before you. See Rule 2

### **Relationship with the general public**

A judicial officer must not exhibit outrageous behavior in public. His utterances should be guided. He should avoid discussing cases before him or making political comments in public. See Rule 4 and 6. Though a judicial officer, like any other citizen is entitled to freedom of expression, as stated in Rule 5, in exercising the right, he should always conduct himself in such a manner as to preserve the dignity of the judicial officer and the impartiality and independence of the judiciary. The judicial officer is expected to act with restraining in public and avoid delving into arguments in public. He should avoid a situation where because he has expressed his opinion, he is subjected to political or personal attacks. Rule 5(d) requires the judicial officer to adhere strictly to political silence. As mentioned earlier, the judicial officer may engage in extra-curricula activities, in sports and religion where he will invariably meet continuously with the members of the public. He must carry himself with dignity without 'showing off' as they say in local parlance.

To further avoid pitfalls, a judicial officer can improve his finances by investing in real estate or other forms of investment. He must however not place himself in a situation where those involved in domiciling his investment require him to use his judicial powers to gain some advantage.

A judicial officer is not allowed to accept gifts from members of the public. As we have seen, there is a possibility that these people may have reasons to have a matter before his court. See Rule 13.5. The Code of Conduct allows gifts from relatives or personal friends on occasion as custom demands.

### **IN HIS JUDGMENT WRITING**

The protocol of following precedence in the judiciary is the observance of the doctrine of Stare decisis. The doctrine of **Stare decisis** is well rooted in the **Nigeria** jurisprudence. It is a well-settled principle of judicial policy, which must be strictly adhered to by all lower courts. The implication is that a lower court is bound by the decision of a higher court even where that decision was given erroneously. It is unconscionable for a lower court to depart from principles laid down by a higher court or the highest court in the land. To avoid falling into this pit, the judicial officer must hone his research skills. It will be unpardonable to follow a precedence of the Court of Appeal when there is a Supreme Court decision overriding the decision of that Court of Appeal. It is unethical for a judicial officer of a lower court to formulate his own interpretation of the law.

In writing his judgment, the judicial officer must use decent and professional language. He should refrain from using abusive words on counsel or witnesses. He is allowed to express his opinion on the negative actions of these individuals but must not degenerate to making it look personal.

As can be seen from the provisions of the Constitution, it is unethical to invite lawyers to readopt their written addresses after the 90 days provision for delivering judgments. A judicial officer should therefore arrange his diary specifically to be able to complete writing the judgment within the period specified including the recall of counsel to address him on issues he has raised suo motu.

In conclusion and with reference to Rule 1, to avoid pitfalls in the exercise of his function as a judicial officer must ensure propriety and the appearance of propriety, both in his professional and personal life. As members of the public expect a high standard of conduct from a Judge, he or she must, when in doubt about attending an event or receiving a gift, however unimportant, ask himself or herself the question- "How might this look in the eyes of the public?" The Judge must be sensitive on the need to avoid contacts with people that may lead society to speculate that there is a special relationship between him and the person and give the impression that the Judge may be tempted to favour that person in the performance of his duties.

Thank you