



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS

If Thompson

YEAR OF CALL: 2020



If Thompson is a globally renowned Movement Lawyer, recognized for her expertise in the intersection of law, Racial Justice, language justice, digital freedom, and human rights.

She specialises in all areas of criminal defence and human rights law with particular expertise in youth matters, assault emergency workers, s.45 Modern slavery defences and cases to do with vulnerable defendants. She is also one of the leading practitioners on the use of racial trauma experts in criminal defence cases and highlighting the issue of anti-Blackness and racial discrimination within criminal matters.

If Thompson is also instructed on the COVID-19 Inquiry.

She was also a 2023 Legal Aid Lawyer on the Year finalist in the category of 'Legal Aid New Comer'.

"Ms Thompson is an outstanding legal aid barrister who explores every possible avenue for her clients. She is willing to challenge cases in bold but necessary ways, and achieves great outcomes as a result. She is a specialist in racial justice. Many of her cases have an intersect of racial injustice & police misconduct, and she has adapted her practice to use the law in creative ways to actively challenge these matters."

GHISLAINE SANDOVAL, HODGE JONES & ALLEN

"Ms Thompson has strong interpersonal skills, a great capacity for group work, collaboration, and partnership with diverse stakeholders which contributed greatly to the UN Working Group of Experts on people of African Descent mission to the UK Country Visit."

MS. CHRISTINA SAUNDERS, UNITED NATIONS WORKING GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

SECRETARY

"She is an all-rounded excellent barrister, I am always amazed by her work and professionalism."

DANIELLE HORTON, WHELDON LAW

"Ms Thompson has a personal charm. She has a very calming and positive nature."

ANTONIA CHARLES, MTC SOLICITORS

"Her bravery in highlighting to members of the judiciary issues like the over-policing of Black boys, and the trauma that results, cannot be overstated. She has pioneered and managed the improbable feat of securing discontinued prosecutions in such cases. I am in awe of her fearlessness coupled with her ability as an advocate to convey widely neglected arguments about anti-blackness and over-policing."

MR KUSHAL SOOD, SHU LAW SOLICITOR

If you would like to get in touch with Ife please contact the clerking team:

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CRIMINAL DEFENCE

Ife deals with youth, magistrates and Crown Court matters. She has particular expertise defending vulnerable defendants, including those with severe and complex mental health issues and drug addiction, and is often found making successful applications for adjournments to assess her client's fitness to plead or fitness to stand trial. She has also represented victims of trafficking and child criminal exploitation. Her background in international human rights law, youth work and her work as a cultural and Black-British English independent researcher makes her qualified to advise on these matters within a criminal context and raise legal arguments on language injustice. She has also dealt with Crown Court appeals.

She is regularly instructed in cases involving allegations of assaults on emergency workers cases in the Crown Court, in which she is able to contextualise her client's experience and ensure it is at the heart of the case, as well as successfully bringing up issues like racial trauma. One such case in which she relied on a racial trauma expert led to the prosecution offering no evidence against her youth client: the case was covered by [LAG](#).

Ife is also interested in challenges against the use of police powers at protests and protecting protesters' rights within a criminal context. Ife is the founding Director of Black Protest Legal Support, an organisation formed to monitor police misconduct at BLM protests in 2020, where she trained legal observers, provided legal assistance and drafted legal advice 'bust cards' that were handed out directly to activists. She has been invited to many seminars to discuss her work on protest and human rights including the DFF Fund, Reb Law Conference and the Law Centre conference.

CIVIL ORDERS

Ife is also well versed in defending applications for Criminal Behaviour Orders and ensuring her clients' human rights are upheld. This has led to many wide-reaching conditions being removed from the order. She has also represented high profile drill rappers challenging alleged breaches of their criminal behaviour orders. She has also successfully resisted disproportionate terms in Sexual Risk Orders and Criminal Behaviour Orders.

NOTABLE CASES

R V XC (Isleworth Crown Court) November 2023

Successfully defended West London Drill Rapper ZK, in which the Crown offered no evidence in the case. On day two, the trial was adjourned when Ife raised serious concerns as to Identification Evidence from the YouTube music videos and the disclosure failings. These issues led to her serving an abuse of process skeleton argument on the Crown. Instructed by MTC Solicitors

R V L (Isleworth Crown Court) June 2023

Defending in a PWTIS Case Ife raised data protection law and digital rights legal arguments on law enforcement's ability to seize and extract mobile phone data. This legal argument was made on day three of the trial and resulted in the Judge discharging the jury and relisting the matter to explore the important legal points I raised.

R v LZ (Crown Court) 2023

Ife secured a low-end custodial sentence for a young adult client who pleaded guilty to possession with intent to supply class A drugs. The client had recent previous convictions for possession with intent to supply class A drugs.

Ife successfully made submissions as to where the client fell on the guidelines and the judge treated LZ as having played a lesser role. Ife also made submissions to the court on the need for her client's experience of racial discrimination at the hands of the police to be a factor accounted for in her client's personal mitigation. In addition, she highlighted her client's young age and how their prior periods in custody had hindered their access to a support network within their crucial development years. The judge agreed with Ife's submission that her client's experience of racial discrimination should be treated as mitigation, stating that her emphasis on the effects (systemic and interpersonal) of racial discrimination on her client as a young Black man had greatly helped the sentencing exercise and noting that the sentence would have not been on the lower end of the custodial scale if not for Ife's submissions.

R v K (Crown Court) 2023

The Crown offered no evidence in an assault emergency worker case after Ife successfully resisted attempts by the Crown to proceed with a PTPH in spite of them not having fully reviewed the evidence. Ife alerted the court to the issues that the previous judge had noted, including the high levels of police aggression throughout the incident and the actions of the complainant police officer that had yet to be reviewed by the Crown. She further highlighted to the court the police's failure to secure all of the evidence as part of their investigative duty and served on the Crown CCTV footage the defendant had secured, which supported their innocence. On viewing this CCTV, the Crown evidence offered no evidence.

R v Z (Youth Court) 2022

Ife successfully applied to vacate a guilty plea and set down a trial with a racial trauma expert listed to demonstrate in her client's state of mind at time of the arrest. Ife then drafted detailed representations to the Crown, which were read on the day of trial. The Crown offered no evidence shortly afterwards.

R v W (Magistrates court) 2022

Ife drafted a skeleton argument focusing on breaches of PACE in the ID procedures used to identify her client. The CPS reviewed the skeleton argument and immediately offered no evidence to the charge in light of the breaches .

R v L (Magistrates Court) 2022

Successfully raised issue of language injustice in closing speech as Crown sought to rely on a non-Jamaican patois speaker's wrong interpretation of a word used by the defendant. Client was found not guilty.

R v X (Youth Court) 2022

Youth client was spared a mandatory custodial sentence for possession of a knife after the judge read Ife's sentencing note, which detailed her client's adverse life circumstances and set out submissions on the harm a custodial sentence would have on his health and life outcomes. Ife also highlighted the issue of racial disparity in the youth custodial estate. The judge noted that Ife's written submissions were extremely helpful.

PRO BONO

Ife is committed to pro bono work, community organising and movement lawyering.

She actively supported those affected by the Windrush scandal by volunteering at Windrush Legal Clinic. She was also a part of the Sarah Reed Campaign and the BME Lawyers for Grenfell group.

During her BPTC studies, she volunteered as a East London Family Court duty advocate through the University of Law Legal Clinic. She represented clients on matters involving child arrangements orders, specific issue and prohibited steps applications as well as a number of non-molestation orders, and drafted court orders following hearings. Ife was also a FRU volunteer advocate for social security appeals, drafting written submissions for tribunal hearings.

As a community organiser, she has set up two organisations, BLAM UK and Black Protest Legal Support (BPLS) UK. BLAM is an educational and advocacy not-for-profit that teaches Black history in schools and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) across London.

BLAM has partnered with the Equal Rights Trust to bring about a legal challenge to the UK government for failing in its legal obligations under ICERD by not including Black history and anti-racism on the national curriculum. BLAM also provides free education law advocates to parents and YOTs across London.

Ife founded Black Protest Legal Support UK in May 2020 in the wake of the global Black Lives Matter protests to ensure BLM protesters in the UK could have access to pro bono legal support and representation, whilst ensuring their civil liberties were protected on the ground by lawyers acting as legal observers. BPLS gathered 100 barristers and lawyers on the ground for the first two of the largest protest dates in June 2020. BPLS legal observers held the police to account during the unlawful use of section 50 of the Police Reform Act within kettles. Ife continues to volunteer as a legal observer and contributes to drafting bust cards explaining protesters' rights. Black Protest Legal Support jointly released a guide, available [here](#), with the Howard League on how lawyers can make Black lives matter in the criminal justice system. Ife drafted the forward and worked extensively on the sections in regard to racial trauma, disproportionality in school exclusions and international best practice in relation to systemic racism as a mitigating factor in sentencing hearings.

BACKGROUND

Prior to coming to the Bar, Ife gained broad experience in criminal law, international human rights, education law and family law. She has previously worked as a criminal paralegal on police station, magistrates' and Crown Court matters, and regularly drafted defence statements and research memos.

In 2018, Ife was a family law paralegal at Venters Solicitors. She worked on public and private family law matters, often supporting vulnerable clients. Before this she was an education and community care paralegal at Just for Kids Law, providing assistance and representation to vulnerable young people on school exclusion matters. passionate about providing holistic support to young people and was a youth worker at a charity called Art Against Knives, and a volunteer Youth Referral Panel member for over two years at the Brixton Youth Offending Team.

In 2020, Ife was selected by the United Nations Office for Human Rights as the UK's UN Fellow for the UN International Decade for People of African Descent. As a UN Fellow, Ife campaigns for better protection of the human rights of people of African descent in the UK. In this capacity, she has drafted international human rights

concerns and complaints to United Nations Special Procedures, including the Working Group on People of African Descent and the Special Rapporteur on Racism and the Rights of the Child. One of these urgent

complaints to the UN Human Rights Council was in regard to the ‘Jamaica 50’ deportations. Another early warning measure she led on to the UN ICERD Committee resulted in UN experts condemning a UK government report. She has also presented in front of various UN bodies including delivering an intervention at the 2nd Meeting of the 27th United Nations

Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (WGEPAD) session. She maintains an active interest in international human rights law and its intersection with racial justice and is currently supporting the new UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent.

PUBLICATIONS

vide details].

[A Racial Justice Approach to Mitigation in criminal sentences – *Cambridge Journal of the Law, Politics and Art* \(December 2023\)](#)

[Using UN Frameworks to Further Racial Justice within Britain - *Oxford Human Rights Blog* \(October 2021\)](#)
Article

[Discriminatory Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly - *Oxford Human Rights Blog* \(October 2021\)](#) Article

[Making Black Lives Matter in the Criminal Justice System, Howard League and Black Protest Legal Support \(May 2021\)](#) Report

[The Mangrove 9 and the Radical Lawyering Tradition - *Verso Books* \(October 2020\)](#) Article

[Black Lives Matter UK: For Lasting Change, We Need ‘Movement Lawyers’ - *Eachother* \(August 2020\)](#) Article

TRAINING AND SEMINARS

Ife’s international acclaim recently led to an invitation from the Digital Freedom Fund to speak at a prestigious event in Berlin. At the heart of Ife's talk was the exploration of building effective movements against digital policing, delving into critical questions that shape our understanding of this complex issue. You can watch the livestream of her session [here](#), where she passionately advocates for a more just and liberated digital future.

Ife is a frequent television and radio commentator who offers incisive insights on the criminal legal system, courtroom injustices and anti-Blackness.

Lecture for the University of Law: ‘Black Lives Matter and International Human Rights’

Air Jordan’s Real Talks: a Celebration of Black British History and Culture

National Education Conference on developing an anti-racist Pedagogy

Oxford University on the UK’s BLM Protests Middle Temple’s Black Lives Matter event

A talk at Leigh Day on the legacy of lawyers supporting protesters and the law around protesting in light of the coronavirus restrictions.

Guest curator at the London Metropolitan Archives, where she curated a project using historical Black-British archival through audiovisual primary sources.

City Hall keynote speaker on the link between school exclusions (Timpson Review) and the criminal justice system

EDUCATION

Ife graduated from the University of Sussex with an upper second-class honours degree in Law with Politics. She was awarded a scholarship from the University of Sussex.

She completed her self-funded LLM BPTC part-time over two years at the University of Law.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Police Action Lawyers Group (PALG)

Black Protest Legal Support UK

Executive Committee for the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Executive Committee of Society of Black Lawyers

LANGUAGES

Yoruba

Black-British English

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