

Justice Leah J. Sears-Collins

Supreme Court of Georgia

Atlanta, GA

The first woman member and only the fourth African-American woman to sit on the highest court of any state or the District of Columbia, Justice Leah J. Sears-Collins is among the youngest members of the nation's state high courts. Before becoming a judge, she was the first female African-American attorney with a major Atlanta law firm.



Coming to the bench of the Supreme Court of Georgia in the spring of this year, Justice Sears-Collins is a former judge of the Fulton County Superior Court (1989-92), judge of the City Court of Atlanta (1985-88), and practicing attorney with the firm of Alston & Bird of Atlanta (1980-85), during which time she also served as judge *pro hac vice* of the City Court of Atlanta. Justice Sears-Collins held a position as reporter for the *Columbus Ledger* newspaper in Columbus, Georgia (1976-77), before entering law school.

Justice Sears-Collins was named the 1990-91 Black Woman of Achievement by Southern Bell and the 1988-89 Outstanding Young Woman of America by Leadership Atlanta; she received the Atlanta Chapter of the NAACP Award for Community Service, the 1988 distinguished Leadership Award for Outstanding Service in the Judiciary, and was the 1990 Honoree for *Dollars & Sense Magazine's* "Salute to African-American Business and Professional Women."

She is the founding president of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys; a member of the Executive Council of Younger Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Georgia; the founder of the Battered Women's Project of Columbus, Georgia; a member of the American, National, Georgia, Atlanta, and Gate City Bar Associations; and a member of the National Association of Women Judges and the National Task Force on Gender Bias in the Courts.

Justice Sears-Collins earned her B.S. from Cornell University in 1976 and her J.D. from Emory University School of Law in 1980. She is pursuing a master's degree in Judicial Studies from the National Judicial College at Reno, Nevada. She is the parent of two children.