

Speaker Biography



Dwazendra J. Smith is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana. She is a solo practitioner at D. Smith Legal, L.L.C in Lafayette, Louisiana. She is licensed in Louisiana and Texas, a board-certified Family Law Specialist, certified by the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization, and the only Black board-certified Family Law Specialist in the state of Louisiana. In addition to Family Law, her practice includes, but is not limited to, Criminal defense (state and federal), Personal Injury (state and federal), Estate Planning and appellate work. She also provides *pro bono* services and is the Chair of the *Pro Bono* Advisory Committee for the Lafayette Bar Association. She also served as the President of the Lafayette Young Lawyers Association for the 2015 - 2016 term and was both the first Black and first Black female President. In addition to being an attorney, she is also an adjunct professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Ms. Smith is a 2009 graduate of Southern University Law Center. During her law school matriculation, she served as the Student Bar Association President (2008-2009) and 2L Class President (2007-2008). She also served on the Moot Court Board, was a pupil of the American Inns of Court, and the Symposium Editor of the inaugural board for Southern University Law Center's second law journal, the *Journal of Race, Gender, and Poverty*. She was also a member of various organizations such as the Criminal Law Society, Delta Theta Phi Law Fraternity and the Black Law Students Association (BLSA). She was the recipient of the ALI - ABA Scholarship and Leadership Award, the Chancellor's Leadership Award, and the CALI Award for the highest grades in Legal Writing and Security Devices.

Prior to graduating from SULC, she was a summer extern for the late great Honorable Ralph E. Tyson of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana and summer intern for retired Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson of the Louisiana Supreme Court. Prior to attending law school, Ms. Smith attended Louisiana State University in Shreveport (LSU-S) and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 2006. She achieved all of this while being a single mother to her beloved daughter, Dhaija, who is a honorary graduate of SULC.

Ms. Smith is currently a member of the Lafayette Parish Bar Association, the Louisiana State Bar Association and the Acadiana Inns of Court. She is admitted to practice in all Louisiana and Texas state courts and before the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana, the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana, the United States District Court for the Western District of Louisiana and the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Ms. Smith has always led a life of service and has provided *pro bono* services for over thirteen years, receiving numerous accolades for same. However, she does not do it for the awards or recognition. She has always wanted to be an attorney since childhood to help others and to truly make a difference in the world. Throughout her legal career, she has always been motivated to volunteer and serve others because she feels that regardless of socioeconomic status, everyone should have access to the legal system and access to attorneys who will zealously represent them. Ms. Smith is honored and elated to be a part of this event, and she looks forward to speaking with everyone, motivating everyone and answering any questions.