

MARU SMITH-OPABOLA

University of Florida Levin College of Law, Research and Teaching Fellow
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

University of South Carolina Joseph P. Rice School of Law, Columbia, SC
Assistant Professor, Aug. 2026 (upcoming)

University of Florida, Levin College of Law, Gainesville, FL
Research & Teaching Fellow, Aug. 2024–present

- Commendation for Excellence in Student Course Evaluations (Fall 2024)

Courses Taught: First Amendment; Media Law (Spring 2026); Seminar in Race and the First Amendment

EDUCATION

Columbia University, New York, NY

M.S., Journalism, 2012

- Columbia University Association of Black Journalists, Public Relations & Communications Director

Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA

J.D., 2008

- *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Journal*, Editorial Staff
- Learning and Mentorship Program (L.A.M.P.), Co-Chair
- Trial Advocacy Workshop led by Professor Charles Ogletree, Student Attorney Finalist
- Research Assistant, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute

University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

B.A., *cum laude*, in Political Science, 2005

- Multicultural Student of the Year Award Recipient
- Golden Key International Honor Society

TEACHING & RESEARCH INTERESTS

Primary: First Amendment, Constitutional Law, Torts, Media Law, Law & Technology, Race and the Law

SCHOLARSHIP

- *Recentering Receivers in the Press Clause* (job-talk paper)
- *Processing the First Amendment* (work in progress)
- *Mass Incarceration and Criminal Justice*, Greenhouse Justice Booklet Vol 1: Racial Reconciliation (Feb. 2021)

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- **Annual Faculty Conference**, Selected Works-in-Progress Workshop: *Receiving Speech in the Press Clause*, New Orleans, LA, Jan. 2026
- **Southeastern Association of Law Schools meeting**, Works-in-Progress Workshop: Constitutional Law, *Processing the First Amendment*, Amelia Island, FL, July 2025
- **University of Milan**, Moderator, Panel on Forthcoming Books in the Field, *Private Law & Multicultural Identities*, July 2025
- **San Diego School of Law, Lutie A. Lytle Conference**, *The Pressing Matter: Recovering the Collective Right of Receivership in the Press Clause*, June 2025
- **Northeastern University School of Law, Junior Scholars Conference**, *Demise of the Fairness Doctrine: Decentering the Public's Interest and the Right to Truth in the Marketplace of Ideas*, Feb. 2025
- **Sheriff's Election Forum**, Forum Host (facilitated public questions and answers with Sheriff candidates), Gainesville, FL, June 2020

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS (continued)

- **Greenhouse Leadership Conference**, *Justice, The Bible and the Modern World*, September 2019
- **Greenhouse Leadership Conference**, *Justice and Reconciliation*, September 2018
- **University of Florida Levin College of Law, 2016 Law & Justice Conference**, *The Legal Ramifications of Cyber-bullying*, Gainesville, FL, Feb. 2016
- **Central Florida Urban League Young Professionals**, *How to Effectively Lobby Your Government*, Orlando, FL, January 2016
- **Empowerment Center Oversight Advisory Board**, *Citizen Workgroup Recommendations for Dignity* Village, Gainesville, FL, March 2015

EXPERIENCE

Office of the Public Defender, Ninth Judicial Circuit, Orlando, FL

Assistant Public Defender, Feb. 2022–Jul. 2022

Managed caseload of over 200 cases, securing positive outcomes through trial and negotiation strategies. Analyzed applicable laws, probable outcomes, and development of defense strategy from intake through trial or other conclusion of case. Provided authoritative legal advice to clients and was responsible for presenting effective oral arguments representing clients position before the Court.

Greenhouse Church, Inc., Gainesville, FL

Justice Director and In-House Counsel, Nov. 2013–Dec. 2021

- Launched monthly Restoration of Civil Rights clinic in partnership with University of Florida Levin College of Law to assist hundreds of people with felony convictions apply for voting rights.
- Developed and wrote educational content for justice education booklet; taught at annual conference on race and justice topics, with an emphasis on welcoming people of all backgrounds.
- Led coalition of faith and political leaders in support of passing Restoration of Civil Rights Amendment
- Negotiated terms, secured financing, and led the successful completion of \$21 million dollar building project.
- Advocated before government officials for planned development amendments, zoning modifications, and tax exemptions.
- Represented student in Title IX sexual assault investigation at large public university with a successful outcome.

Gainesville Sun, Gainesville, FL

Politics, Crime and Criminal Justice Contributor, Aug. 2012–Nov. 2013

- Wrote investigative stories covering government, crime, and policing.
- Mentored student reporters on conductive interviews and investigative research.

Bilzin Sumberg LLP, Miami, FL

Complex Commercial Litigation Associate, Jun 2009–Jun. 2010; Summer Associate, 2006 & 2007

- Researched and wrote pleadings and memoranda for successful settlement of trademark infringement suit seeking over \$100 million.
- Conducted successful defense against federal forfeiture action worth \$1 million through pleadings and motions.

Vinson and Elkins LLP, Dallas, TX

Commercial Litigation Associate, Aug. 2008–Jun. 2009; Summer Associate, 2007

- Researched and drafted memoranda and briefs in defense of major health insurance companies facing legal challenge to Preferred Provider Organization agreements and payout determinations.
- Utilized Summation e-discovery software to conduct document review in oil and gas dispute.

BAR ADMISSIONS

Florida (active), Texas (voluntarily inactive status)