

# Smooth Moves Diversity Initiative: 16 Years Strong

By Janae Cummings

For the past 16 years, Smooth Moves has been the Commercial and Federal Litigation Section's premiere event that highlights, celebrates, and honors diverse attorneys throughout New York. On May 16, 2023, it was no surprise that the section came together in full force to honor its well-deserving recipient of the Honorable George Bundy Smith Pioneer Award, Hon. Sylvia Hinds-Radix, a true champion and trailblazer in public service and diversity in every sense. The section's other honoree, law student Donald Kim, demonstrated impressive credentials that contributed to his receiving this year's Kay Crawford Murray Commercial Division Law Student Diversity Fellowship at the event. Donald is a rising 2L at Hofstra Law School.

The theme for this year's Smooth Moves event, "Career Strategies for Diverse Attorneys," echoed throughout the Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Courthouse. The event commenced with a CLE entitled, "Diversity in Public Service." Moderated by Kan Nawaday, co-chair of the section's Diversity Committee, the CLE presenters were Paul Zaragoza (chief of the Workers' Compensation Division, New York City Law Department), Camille Joseph Varlack (chief of staff, Office of the Mayor of New York City), and Lynelle Magibley (first deputy commissioner, New York City Department of Corrections). The CLE program provided stark statistics related to diversity in the law, noting that although there is a significant amount of data reporting on diversity in private practice, there is limited data in the public service sector. The speakers opined on the value of diversity, retention of diverse talent, mentorship, and sponsorship through their own experiences and offered advice to other diverse attorneys. Importantly, the speakers discussed the general need for leadership within the law to create space for discussions concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion, and expanding institutions that not only value mentorship but are intentional about investing in diverse talent and welcoming accountability.

The CLE program was followed by an awards ceremony recognizing the Honorable Sylvia Hinds-Radix for her indisputable embodiment of the spirit of George Bundy Smith. Tracee Davis of Seyfarth Shaw introduced Judge Hinds-Radix, noting her background of accomplishments and numerous accolades, as well as Judge Hinds-Radix's commitment to working with the community to develop young talent with a passion for the law. Many of those who were present for the

inception of Smooth Moves were also in attendance, including Lesley Rosenthal and Carla Miller.

As the 81st New York City corporation counsel and the first Caribbean-born woman to hold the title, Judge Hinds-Radix is "acutely aware of the road" she must pave, declaring to the room of barristers that "mentorship matters." Judge Hinds-Radix thanked her own mentors, like Justice William Thompson, for their encouragement and advice.

As for Judge Hinds-Radix's view on diversity and Smooth Moves' mission to advance diverse attorneys in the legal profession, one particular statement from her speech stood out: "It is important that we are inclusive in what we do, so that we ensure that the nation acknowledges its true potential." After almost two decades, Smooth Moves strives to accomplish just that.

The Smooth Moves event co-chairs this year were Vernadette Horne and Kan Nawaday, and the Smooth Moves Planning Committee members were Ignatius Grande, Sara Chang, Carrie Cohen, Tracee Davis, Carla M. Miller, Cassandra Porsch, Lauren Wachtler, Kaylin Whittingham, Geoffrey Williams, and Janae Cummings.



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