

Gay S. Steele Keynote Speaker: Judge Laurel Beatty Blunt

Judge Laurel Beatty Blunt is a trailblazer who has forged an exceptional path, seamlessly integrating a robust legal foundation with an unwavering commitment to education and civic engagement. Graduating magna cum laude from Spelman College in 1996 with a B.S. in Psychology, she continued her academic journey at Vanderbilt University Law School, earning a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 1999.

She has had an extensive litigation career, marked by notable roles at Frost Brown Todd, Kegler Brown Hill + Ritter, and Otto Beatty Jr., & Associates, where she adeptly represented both plaintiffs and defendants in civil litigation. Demonstrating her dedication to democratic values, she served as Director of Legislative Affairs and Counsel to the Voting Rights Institute for the Ohio Secretary of State.

In 2009, Judge Beatty Blunt was appointed to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, General Division, presiding over a diverse spectrum of cases—from felony criminal matters to administrative appeals and multi-million-dollar civil litigation. Her impact on the bench was profound, overseeing more than 10,000 cases and showcasing a nuanced understanding of the complexities within the legal system and its impact on communities.



Breaking barriers, in 2018, Judge Beatty Blunt made history as the first Black woman to serve on the Tenth District Court of Appeals. This court handles appeals from various divisions of the Common Pleas courts—General Division, Probate, Domestic Relations, and Juvenile. Additionally, the Court of Appeals handles appeals from the Franklin County Municipal Court, the Ohio Court of Claims, and some state agencies. In this pivotal role, Judge Beatty Blunt presides over a wide array of cases, demonstrating her versatility in handling almost any type of case that comes through the state court system.

Selected twice for the prestigious Towsley Policymaker in Residence program, Judge Beatty Blunt has contributed to the University of Michigan Ford School of Public Policy. In this esteemed position, she not only delivered impactful lectures to the university community but also provided guidance and mentorship to students. In 2022, Judge Beatty Blunt taught about the United States Supreme Court and its profound impact, illuminating the complexities and far-reaching consequences of the highest court's rulings. In 2023, she continued her educational endeavors by delving into the unique qualities of state and local courts, offering valuable insights to teach about the intricacies of the legal landscape beyond the federal level.

A passionate advocate, Judge Beatty Blunt delivered a compelling TEDx talk titled “Curiosity’s Impact In Court & Daily Life” ([Add a little bit of body text](#)), using a hypothetical court case to underscore the importance of staying curious to understand the social determinants influencing individuals’ actions. Through her digital series #LaurelLaysDowntheLaw, she makes every day legal topics clear practical, and accessible to all-covering everything from parking laws and workplace rights to what happens if you die without a will.

Her outstanding contributions have earned well-deserved recognition, including the Women of Achievement Award by YWCA Columbus in 2023, the Leading the Way Award by the Ohio Women’s Bar Association, and the Impact Award by the John Mercer Bar Association in 2021. Actively involved in legal associations such as the Ohio Women’s Bar Association, Columbus Bar Association, and Ohio Black Judges Association, Judge Beatty Blunt continues to be a sought-after speaker, sharing her insights on both legal and non-legal issues and playing a prominent role in civic education initiatives throughout Ohio.