

Houston high school teacher wins Toastmasters' 2018 World Championship of Public Speaking®

Ramona J. Smith rises above 30,000 participants to win world's largest speech contest

ENGLEWOOD, Colo., Aug. 27, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- With a speech titled "Still Standing," Ramona J. Smith, a high school teacher from Houston, Texas, won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking on Saturday, Aug. 25. For the first time in the contest's history, female competitors swept the top three positions. Smith is only the fifth woman to capture the World Champion of Public Speaking title since the contest began in 1938. Watch Smith's winning speech [here](#).

Smith's winning speech resonated with a capacity crowd of nearly 2,000 from around the world, who attended the contest held at the McCormick Place convention center in Chicago, Ill. She claimed the coveted title with a motivational story of her own life, drawing on a boxing analogy to share how she overcame failures, including dropping out of college four times and a divorce.

Smith reached the championship level after several eliminating rounds that began six months ago with 30,000 participants. Smith was one of 10 finalists emerging from a semifinal round held on Aug. 23 with 106 competitors.

Smith said the key message of her six-minute speech was strength during adversity. "When you are in the ring of life, you will face some challenges," she said. "You are going to get hit, you will be punched, you will be bruised. Even though you fall down and stumble, all you have to do is find whatever strength lies within you or outside you from family, friends, faith, your mentors and coaches to help pull you back up."

The second-place winner was Zifang "Sherrie" Su, a teacher from Tianjin, China, with her humorous speech titled "[Turn Around](#)" about salvaging personal relationships and meeting her husband in Toastmasters. An experienced speech competitor, Su said she entered this contest to "Let the world hear the voice from China and prove that Chinese speakers can be world class."

Third place went to Anita Fain Taylor, a consultant from Pembroke Pines, Fla., with her speech "[It Is What It Is, It Ain't What It Ain't](#)."

Speakers delivered five-to seven-minute speeches on wide-ranging topics, and were judged on content, organization and delivery. The three top winners —Smith, Su and Fain Taylor—led the field of 10 contestants in the annual Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking held during the organization's annual convention in Chicago, Aug. 22-25.

About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Englewood, Colo., the organization's membership exceeds 357,000 in more than 16,600 clubs in 143 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow [@Toastmasters](#) on Twitter.

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