



Q&A WITH Hon. Ricardo M. Urbina (Ret.)

Please provide a snapshot of your legal career prior to joining JAMS.

After growing up in New York City in Queens, I attended Georgetown University and then Georgetown Law. Immediately after graduation, I started my legal career at the Public Defender Service (PDS) for the District of Columbia. During those years at the PDS, I tried several misdemeanors and felony matters, including one homicide, which resulted in the acquittal of a young lady who was charged with first-degree murder in the killing of her boyfriend.

After the PDS, I joined a former classmate in private practice for a few years before Howard University Law School invited me to join its new criminal justice program. The criminal justice program focused on training second- and third-year law students to represent indigent people before the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. During my seven-plus years at Howard, I taught courses in torts, criminal procedure and evidence while supervising students in court. During my seventh year of teaching full time while practicing law part time legal, President Ronald Reagan appointed me to the D.C. Superior Court, where I served in every division and was the presiding judge of the Family Division for three years. When the court's felony calendar became overloaded, the chief judge appointed a team of judges to provide speedier trials in first-degree murder, rape and child molestation cases. Within two-and-a-half years, the backlog was eliminated.

While in my 13th year on the D.C. Superior Court, President Bill Clinton appointed me to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, where I served for 18 years before retirement.

How did you become interested in alternative dispute resolution (ADR)?

I tried hundreds of cases during my 31 years on the bench. I especially enjoyed working on interesting cases managed

by skilled lawyers. Upon retirement, I searched for a career I would enjoy and that would allow me to use my skills. Several of my retired colleagues urged me to consider working with JAMS. I admired the company's approach to the growing demand for conflict resolution, its presence in national and international dispute resolution arenas and its corporate style and philosophy. I determined that these qualities were consistent with my post-retirement agenda.

Which of your contributions to ADR are you most proud of?

During my 31 years on the bench, I settled many civil disputes through mediation and, of course, through jury and non-jury litigation. I take great pride in the reputation I earned for being firm but fair, a quality that I employ in cases requiring mediation or arbitration.

How would you describe your arbitration style?

I try to navigate and resolve controversies by adhering to the applicable rules while being mindful of the equities that may be invoked. My goal is to offer all parties respect, attention and prompt decisions.

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What do you enjoy most about mediation?

Good lawyering on both sides of the controversy. I appreciate clarity of presentation as well as strong and honest advocacy.

Why is diversity important in ADR?

Diversity is essential not only in ADR, but in every aspect of life because it provides everyone an opportunity to listen to and learn the views of others. Neutrals, as well as the parties and the lawyers, bring different perspectives, and they can introduce empathy as an ingredient for understanding the root of a dispute, which can make it easier for parties to reach a resolution.

Tell me about your involvement with the Hispanic National Bar Association and how through your involvement how the organization has grown.

When I started my judicial career on the D.C. Superior Court in 1980, non-English-speaking parties, including those in criminal cases, often were unable to understand the proceedings and be understood because there were no interpreters in the court. Spanish-speaking personnel in the courthouse were often recruited to translate what was being said. Lawyers were often asked to serve as both counsel and interpreters. The Hispanic National Bar Association took on the controversial task of persuading the courts that interpreter services were essential despite the cost. I became a relentless advocate for the cause, along with the Hispanic

National Bar Association, Asian Bar Association, National Bar Association and the Bar Association of the District of Columbia, arguing that the court system was failing to provide equal protection and due process under the law. Together, after a year of negotiations, we prevailed in getting the funds to establish the Office of Interpreter Services, which continues to provide non-English-speakers with interpreter services.

If you could meet and chat with any person throughout history, living or not, who would that be and why?

Nelson Mandela. I would want to learn how he managed to overcome the enormous physical, mental and spiritual obstacles he encountered during his 27 years of incarceration. I would endeavor to learn how he managed to emerge from that ordeal with a peaceful, loving heart full of forgiveness.

What are some of your hobbies?

I enjoy creative writing, playing the guitar, taking long walks with my two Labrador Retrievers, practicing my marksmanship at the gun range, swimming, reading and home landscaping.

Judge Urbina is available to resolve disputes remotely through a number of videoconferencing options. To schedule a case, visit jamsadr.com/urbina or call 202.533.2019.

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