

# The Negotiator

*Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division  
Jeannie M. Adams, Director*

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- Multi-Door introduces remote mediation program
- The division welcomes three new colleagues, says goodbye to two staff members
- The division conducts remote coaching and training

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## Serving the Community During the Time of a Pandemic

By: Jeannie M. Adams

Out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of staff, mediators and the community we serve, the Multi-Door Division moved all mediation services online. The Superior Court Divisions established operating plans to prepare for continuity of operations in the event we cannot operate on-site. We are required to update those plans annually and train our staff. We work closely with the Chief Security Officer and the Executive Officer to undertake this process. However, as we have recently realized, a plan is one thing, to fully implement a plan in reaction to a pandemic is not something any of us fully appreciated until it happened.

In March 2020, we ended business as usual. Multi-Door staff was sent home to telework and our work and personal lives converged in many unexpected ways. For many of us it was an enormous adjustment, which included child and elder care while fulfilling our work obligations. Multi-Door staff and mediators were called upon to provide services in a way that was foreign to many of us. Our job up to this point in time was to bring people together, not keep them apart.

Quite suddenly, we needed to move from 9 in-person mediation programs to operating 9 remote mediation programs. The daily effort required by Multi-Door

staff, the IT Division, and the Civil and Family Divisions was at times overwhelming. Long hours and weekends were necessary to adapt to remote operations and my heartfelt thanks to all my colleagues, my staff and mediators for making this possible.

Preparing to work remotely and conduct mediations is challenging. We have met online with our court partners across the country to learn from them and share with them what was working well and what challenges we were experiencing. The hard

work by staff to take our processes and convert them to online felt like trial by fire because of the speed in which it needed to happen. We are at the early stages of delivering services remotely and will be evaluating its effectiveness as we move forward. I feel confident that we are helping to provide some relief to disputants during this very stressful time.

I want to thank our staff and all our dedicated mediators for their willingness to continue to provide services to the court, learn new ways of mediating, adjust to new technology platforms and work closely with the parties to help them navigate the online process. This took an enormous team effort and I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone that made this happen.

**Converting nine in-person programs to online felt like trial by fire because of the speed in which it needed to happen.**



## Multi-Door Introduces Remote Mediation Program Amid COVID-19 Restrictions

Contributors: Philip Dobrydnio and Bob Hosea

Since the transition to remote operations on March 17<sup>th</sup>, we quickly recognized that the pandemic would have longer-term impacts to providing Multi-Door clients with in-person mediation services. We began working to build our collective knowledge base about remote mediation by spending significant time researching the limited information available on the subject as well as attending numerous online discussions and trainings. Our goal was to position ourselves so we would be ready to kick off remote mediation operations for each of our mediation programs as soon as the Court was agreeable to and ready for us to begin implementation.

During the remainder of March and April, we worked with the Court as they determined which online meeting platform our mediators would use. The WebEx Meetings Free Version was selected. With this information, we developed a variety of new documents, including remote mediation instructions for mediators and parties, mediator guidelines, and a remote mediation agreement to mediate. Each branch developed a remote mediator training process for their respective programs.

In late June, with the awareness that WebEx Meeting Free Version would discontinue unlimited session time, the Court provided Multi-Door case managers with WebEx Enterprise licenses. The Enterprise version provided us with unlimited session time while shifting the meeting scheduling responsibili-

ties from mediators to the case managers. Currently, the Court is planning to move our remote mediation operations to the Zoom Enterprise platform in early August, allowing us to add new features, including the breakout room for caucus sessions.

### Remote Civil ADR Programs

The Civil ADR Branch spent the early days of this transition rescheduling mediations to later dates while adapting to remote operations. In early May, the branch sent an email to all civil mediators, presenting the branch's preparations to begin remote mediation operations, attaching newly developed remote mediation documents, and expressing their interest to recruit as many mediators as possible to be trained for providing remote services. More than 70 mediators expressed interest to attend the required WebEx training and participate in three remote mediation group practice sessions.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the Civil Actions program conducted its first remote mediations. Currently, Civil Actions cases are being mediated on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at 9 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Remote mediation of Small Claims cases began on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Since implementation of its remote services, the program mediated 26 cases in June and has scheduled 18 mediations per week for July. Presently, Small Claims cases are being mediated in the morning and afternoon.

The Probate program held its first remote mediations on July

3<sup>rd</sup>. Probate cases take place Monday through Friday at 1:30 p.m. Both, the Same Day and Jury Demand Landlord & Tenant programs are set to begin remote mediations on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Only lease violation cases are being mediated as these are the only cases that the Court is hearing for the time being.

### Remote Family ADR Programs

The Family and Child Protection Mediation (CPM) programs had to pause ongoing mediations and hold off on scheduling new mediations for a period of approximately 60 days. These programs resumed ongoing mediations and scheduled their first sessions via WebEx on May 11<sup>th</sup>. This was only after developing remote mediation guidelines that maintained the mediator's ability to have parties go through a process that allowed them to be assured that the neutrality, confidentiality, and their ability to express was secure. In addition, the process had to assure that parties involved in intimate partner violence mediations experienced the same sense of security as they would on-site.

Since May 17<sup>th</sup>, when Family Court began hearing non-emergency matters, there has been an increase of cases being sent to mediation intake, and accordingly, more cases referred into the Family mediation program. The program has been working diligently to reschedule those cases that were put on hold in March and has made progress in moving

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## *In Memoriam:* Jack Moskowitz and Ruth Shinn

*By: Karen Leichtnam*

This summer, Multi-Door lost two of its most dedicated volunteers—Jack Moskowitz and Ruth Shinn. We send our condolences to their families and friends.

**Jack Moskowitz**, long-time civil mediator, died at age 93 in June 2020. Mr. Moskowitz became a mediator at Multi-Door in 1990, after his retirement from a distinguished career in such positions as staff member for the Senate Committee on Refugees and Escapees and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense specializing in civil rights and industrial relations. He was a dedicated advocate for progressive causes as part of the original staff of Common Cause.

Jack's warmth and kindness, along with his wisdom and experience, made him a great mediator and a welcome presence at Multi-Door. He remained intellectually active throughout his life, earning a bachelor's in religion in his 70s. He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Faye Moskowitz, and a large and loving family. He will be deeply missed. A private funeral has been held and a memorial service will be held when conditions permit.

**Ruth Elizabeth Shinn** died in May 2020, at age 97. Ms. Shinn mediated for many years in the Small Claims program, bringing years of experience, along with bountiful enthusiasm and a positive, can-do approach. Her modesty kept her from sharing much of her impressive resume, which included working to improve racial and gender equality in such organizations as the First Congre-

gational United Church of Christ in downtown Washington, D.C.

As the first woman moderator (leading officer) of the church, she helped lead the congregation in agreeing to share space with the Metropolitan Community Church, one of the early LGBT religious denominations. During her 25 years at the U.S. Department of Labor's Women Bureau, Ms. Shinn fought for fair working conditions and pay for women. While serving as Executive Director of

the University of Nebraska YWCA, she helped to racially integrate the university-segregated women's dorms.

Another apparent victim of the coronavirus pandemic, Ms. Shinn became ill in April while living at a nursing home in Potomac, Maryland. She is mourned by her extended family of nieces and nephews and their families, about whom she spoke often, as well as many others who knew her and her good works. 

## A Fond Farewell: Perrin Scanlon

*By: Lizbeth Carrillo*

In late March, Multi-Door said goodbye to Civil ADR Program Officer Perrin Scanlon, who accepted a position as Implementation Lead with Mark43. Perrin joined Multi-Door as a Civil ADR Case Manager in June 2014 and served in that position for two and a half years before being promoted to Program Officer. In her capacity as Program Officer, Perrin supervised the Arbitration, Civil Actions, Early Medical Malpractice, Tax, Probate, and Jury Demand Landlord & Tenant programs as well as a team of three case managers. Philip Dobrydnio, former Civil ADR Case Manager and current Community Program Officer, commented that, "Her approachability, sense of fairness and the enthusiasm she imparted made my work both satisfying and enjoyable."

During her time with Multi-Door, Perrin demonstrated exceptional commitment to the development of her programs. She was instrumental in the implementation of the Mediation Readiness Certificate process and in leading the Division's Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) initial efforts by facilitating a meeting between Multi-Door and Utah's court staff involved in Utah's ODR Pilot Project. Prior to her departure, Perrin served as a Subject Matter Expert for the Division in the Courts' Case Management System implementation project.

A Washington Capitals fan, self-confessed foodie, and fitness enthusiast, Perrin is an inspiration for many to exercise and live a healthier life style. We will miss her sharp sense of humor, "...great initiative and positive attitude towards her work. She was very empathetic towards her co-workers and the public," added Leo Pomier, Civil ADR Case Manager. We wish Perrin the best in her new position and future endeavors. 



**Perrin Scanlon at the October 2019 Federal Government Pro-Bono Fair.**

## Meet Our New Team Members

*Contributors: Indra Caudle, Miles MacDonald, and Zeljana Varga*

Please welcome **Sherika Samuel**—Multi-Door’s new Family ADR Deputy Clerk—who joined the Division in April 2020. Sherika brings with her institutional knowledge of the D.C. Courts from her previous experience as a Deputy Clerk II at the Family Court Central Intake Center (CIC) in the Moultrie Courthouse. During her time with CIC, she assisted with the filing of new and subsequent pleadings in Family Court cases. She also cross-trained in marriage and mental health matters to gain a wider understanding of these family cases.



Originally from Florida, she moved back home after her time with CIC and worked as an emergency medical dispatcher for multiple counties in South Florida. But she could not stay away from the District. In March of 2020, she made the decision to return because she wanted to get back into the atmosphere of the court setting. Sherika was drawn to Multi-Door because she wanted to use her previous court knowledge to assist families in a new way. She says that she looks forward to learning more about court mediation and expanding on her court experiences.

Sherika joined the Multi-Door team at the beginning of remote operations. When asked what her favorite thing about Multi-Door has been, she said, “Everybody has been so warm and welcoming! Everyone has helped each other overcome obstacles so that we can have a smooth operation in these remote times, which lets me know that I work with a great team.” She is no stranger to a fast paced, ever changing environment.

Sherika also shared that, although she grew up singing in the choir at church and in high school, she will not serenade us with a “happy birthday” song. Our best wishes to Sherika in her return to the D.C. Courts family, and as she begins her journey with Multi-Door.

**Dylan Bates** is our new Program Officer for the Civil ADR Branch. In his new position, Dylan oversees the Civil Actions, Early Medical Malpractice, and Tax mediation programs as well as the Arbitration program. Some of you may already know Dylan from his work as a Multi-Door Small Claims mediator where he has been mediating for the past year.



Dylan was born in California but mostly grew up in Oklahoma. During his youth, he participated in lasso competitions and one of his performances landed him a spot in the Oklahoma City newspaper. He came to the DMV area to attend George Mason University, where he studied conflict resolution with an international focus. He has remained in the area since college and spent some time studying in Spain. During his spare time, Dylan serves as a volunteer EMT and firefighter for the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

Dylan brings a wide variety of ADR experience from his work as a Community Program Manager at Northern Virginia Mediation Services and his involvement with various international conflict organizations. At this point in his career, Dylan was looking to make a switch to more court based ADR. The uniqueness of Multi-Door’s programs really drew him to seek out the Program Officer position. Dylan shares that the genuine culture of Multi-Door has made things easier for him to get acclimated to the new position in the remote environment. He looks forward to working with all of the great people involved with Multi-Door and joining us in providing our excellent services to the citizens of Washington, D.C.

**Emmett Ward** joined Multi-Door as the new ADR Training Manager in May 2020. Prior to Multi-Door, Emmett worked as the ADR Resources Coordinator for the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO) at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Maryland. Although a large part of his duties as ADR Resources Coordinator included providing continuing education for mediators, it was not his primary focus.



As a self-proclaimed life-long student, Emmett was interested in a position that focused on training. Emmett states that he enjoys conducting trainings because he always learns something new, whether that is connecting with content in a novel way or seeing new perspectives expressed by training participants. His training focus and ADR work exposed Emmett to Multi-Door, so when the Training Manager position became available, he saw it as a perfect fit with his personal and career goals.

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## Karen Leichtnam Retires After 32 Years of Dedicated Service

By: Philip Dobrydnio



Karen Leichtnam, long-time ADR Training Manager, retired on February 28<sup>th</sup> after 32 years of service at the D.C. Superior Court.

She spent her entire court tenure working in Multi-Door. Karen had the great satisfaction of seeing Multi-Door from its fledgling beginnings to the mature and thriving division it has become today. Her work in various division capacities contributed greatly to Multi-Door's growth. It is the mission of ADR that drew her to the work of Multi-Door and was demonstrated by her total commitment to assist mediators to be at their best.

Over the years, Karen served as Program Officer of the Small Claims program, Civil ADR Branch Chief, and Acting Division Director. Her retirement represents a loss of not just a valued colleague but also the loss of part of the institutional memory that provides such an important context as an organization moves forward.

Prior to the Courts, Karen did lobbying work for a non-profit. In that role, she was asked to a "meet-and-greet" sponsored by the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution that piqued her interest in ADR and put her on the career path that many of us have benefited from. Many mediators have shared that Karen's

generosity of spirit made her accessible and someone that could be counted on to provide guidance, the wisdom of experience and knowledge in the ADR field. Personally, my working with Karen gave me a sincere sense of our mission and made me feel as part of a greater whole.



Above: Karen (sitting, middle) posing with division staff at her surprise retirement send-off.

On her last day, the Division gathered for a send-off to celebrate and acknowledge all the contributions Karen made to Multi-Door's success. She observed, in a heartfelt manner, that few people can say they have worked at something that they prize for such a long period of time. For her, the prize is the mediation work that is carried out day in and day out that helps parties come to an understanding of their commonalities and see their differences recede.

We wish Karen all the best in her retirement, knowing she is enjoying her gardening, food, and yoga pursuits. We congratulate her on a journey well-traveled at Multi-Door.

*Retirement wishes and messages on page 7.*

### *Congratulations!*

We are excited to announce the recent promotions of three of our team members: Philip Dobrydnio, Karen Roa, and Zeljana Varga.

After successfully serving in his position as Civil ADR Case Manager for three years, Philip is welcomed back with open arms by the Family ADR Branch as their new Community Program Officer. Philip started his journey with Multi-Door as a Dispute Resolution Specialist (DRS) with the Community Information and Referral Program (CIRP), a program that is very close to his heart. Seven years later, he is back with CIRP to continue serving the D.C. community along with his team of six DRS's. Philip commented that the support he has received from branch management and the commitment of the DRS's has made his transition feel seamless.

Karen Roa is our new Civil ADR Case Manager. She steps into the role formerly filled by Philip. Karen joined the Civil ADR Branch two years ago as their Deputy Clerk. Prior to that, Karen was our Bilingual Receptionist, a position that she fulfilled with great enthusiasm and customer service. Now in her new role, Karen looks forward to continuing working closely with our civil mediators and branch staff.

For five months, Zeljana Varga served as our Family ADR Deputy Clerk before being promoted to Family ADR Case Manager. Another former DRS, Zeljana joined Multi-Door in 2018 given her interest in our family mediation programs. She came to us from the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution at the Fairfax County Government, where she worked as an Assistant Program Coordinator. Zeljana says that she is very excited about this new opportunity.

Congratulations Philip, Karen, and Zeljana!

## Zooming Towards More Training

By: Emmett Ward

Multi-Door has been diligently adapting to the landscape of remote mediation, training mediators for success at the virtual table. During April and May, this effort was in overdrive with Civil and Family ADR Branch staff hosting 39 online training sessions on the use of WebEx Meetings

“ [M]y clients, they felt welcomed because I was prepared”  
— Glendora Meyers, Family Mediator

Free Version for remote mediations and our new remote mediation processes and guidelines. This included: 6 two-hour sessions for the Civil Actions, Small Claims and Landlord & Tenant programs, 19 coaching and skills refresher sessions for the Family program, and 14 small group WebEx sessions for the Family and Child Protection programs.

In June, we provided an additional 15 coaching sessions for remote civil mediators with the assistance of Civil ADR Branch tech gurus, case managers Miles MacDonald and Karen Roa. These coaching sessions, provided mediators with an opportunity to ask questions on the use of specific WebEx features to help them become more comfortable with the application. On June 25<sup>th</sup>, we hosted a Remote Mediator Roundtable which included panelists Diana Ortiz, Family Staff Mediator, Glendora Meyers, Family Mediator, and Steve Altman, Civil Mediator. The three panelists shared their experiences doing some of the first remote mediations and fielded questions and concerns from over 70 attendees about hosting a remote mediation. The panelists stressed how important patience, preparation, and transparency are to the remote process. They also stressed the value of taking the time to become comfortable and competent using the technology. As Ms. Meyers noted, “my clients, they felt welcomed because I was prepared.”

Remote mediation training will continue with new offerings on becoming comfortable with the technology, brainstorming, roleplay opportunities, rapport building, and ethics. Additionally, as Multi-Door transitions to the Zoom platform, numerous opportunities will be offered, including group sessions, coaching, and video tutorials. Keep an eye out for these trainings in the coming months.

### *Family ADR Programs, continued from page 2*

toward reducing the queue of cases waiting to be scheduled. During the mediation hiatus, family mediators participated in a skills refresher role playing training set up by Program Officer Suzanne Rose. All family mediators have made themselves available for remote mediation and have been trained to mediate in this remote setting.

CPM cases presented additional remote challenges due to the number of participants typically present at mediation and to the unique needs of the program that require that an online platform has the capability to have virtual breakout rooms as opposed to just a virtual lobby to place parties. Shavon Brooks, Program Manager, stated that one such challenge was developing a user-friendly process for obtaining the agreement to mediate among the stakeholders and the Office of the General Counsel. She described the underlying issue as being that many families in CPM cases have limited resources. Currently, any client with limited access to technology may participate in mediation by telephone. Ms. Brooks added that these obstacles have been overcome and 61 mediation sessions have been scheduled through August 27<sup>th</sup>.

The Community Information and Referral Program (CIRP) in the Family Branch has also been operating off-site. During remote operations, CIRP's work with the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) has remained at pre-COVID levels and gained greater relevance. Currently, CARECEN is reaching out to CIRP on an almost daily basis. In addition to the typical cases CARECEN refers dealing with employment, housing, and consumer issues, CIRP is also dealing with COVID-19 employment discrimination and denial of work related medical leave cases.

The team of Dispute Resolution Specialists (DRS's) made up of Monica Kriss, Kimberly Link, Cristelia Ramos, Leticia Smith, and Jeff Young underwent remote intake training and have performed to the same high standard as they did when on-site. The DRS's have worked cooperatively with each other to assure that client inquiries are addressed in a timely manner and have been able to clear the back log of mediation intakes that were left uncompleted due to pandemic issues.

Matthew Centeio-Bargasse, Family ADR Branch Chief, stressed that “...throughout remote operations, the Family Branch has done a phenomenal job supporting one another, the mediators, and families we serve. We have a skilled group of individuals who truly exemplify the spirit of teamwork and dedication.”

*Retirement wishes and messages, continued from page 5*

“

When I reflect on Karen's time with the division and her many contributions, a few superlatives come quickly to mind; kind, thoughtful and generous. She has generously shared her knowledge and experience with me and helped me navigate through the many years that I had the pleasure of working with her. She has been an exemplary colleague and trusted confidant. I always knew if I went to her on any matter she would generously share with me her best thinking and years of experience on any issue that may arise. I truly miss talking with her on many issues, whether personal or professional, that landed our way. She has left her mark on the division and I will forever be grateful to have shared a part of that time with her.”

— Jeannie Adams, Division Director

“

There is a study published by Amy Cuddy about the importance of first impressions. The two qualities that she identified as far and away most important in establishing a first impression that would allow you to influence the other party were warmth and competence. Doesn't that describe Karen? Never saw her angry or frustrated. Always found her a great problem solver. She was always my "go to" person for any questions from administrative to mediation technique. I could never say no when she asked me to help out because I knew the event or exercise would be done well and I always wanted to reciprocate for all the help she had provided. She has a great legacy and should be proud of her contribution to the Multi-Door program.”

— Steve Altman, Civil Mediator

“

Over my many years at ADR I learned Karen was my go to person when I had a question or a problem. Whether my issue was one of ADR policy or one concerning the bureaucracy or even legal issues, she would take the time to talk me through it. If she did not have an immediate answer, she would offer to check it out and get back to me. Which she always did. I am grateful for all her help.”

— Charles Byrd, Civil Mediator

“

I have had the pleasure of knowing Karen for quite a long time, knowing her first as a colleague when I worked for the court and since my retirement. Karen sets the standard for her depth of knowledge about mediation, as well as strategies and techniques for working with challenging parties or issues. But what really sets Karen apart is her ability to really listen to mediators, to truly hear us and to make us feel valued. With gratitude Karen for all your contributions.”

— Nancy Cohen, Civil Mediator

“

I don't remember when I first met Karen Leichtnam. I do remember that, no matter her position and responsibilities, she could be trusted. Trusted to listen, to consider carefully, to respond, and to support mediators, and to follow unselfishly her moral compass that never let her lose sight of the ideals, principles, ethics, goals, and purposes of the program. Proud to have worked with her!”

— Janine Harris, Civil and Family Mediator

*New Team Members, continued from page 4*

Emmett began his career in ADR while in AmeriCorps as a mediator for Community Mediation Initiative at the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution. While there, he worked on prison re-entry mediation, which exposed him to a variety of challenging mediations focused primarily on family and housing matters. Emmett received his bachelor's degree in English Literature and master's in Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution both from Salisbury University. While working towards his master's, Emmett continued to mediate, working on cases from neighbor conflicts to civil cases including a big case involving the public-school bus system.

Since starting at Multi-Door, Emmett expressed that he is really impressed with how eager everyone is and how hard everyone is working to make mediations a success. The staff and mediators are all contributing to make things work smoothly. He sees that there is just an extra something that comes out in how people engage; everyone is excited to get work done and make the client experience optimal.

In his spare time, Emmett enjoys spending time on the water with his partner Beth and two children, Finn and Juliana. He is an avid scuba diver and has led people on dives locally and abroad. He has even scuba-dived in the Baltimore aquarium.



Staying Connected While Working from Home



Pictured, clockwise from top left: Jeannie Adams, Jennifer Payden, Leo Pomier, Fasika Tefera (from Change Fusion), Diana Ortiz, Doris Chavez, Joan Burrell, Sherri Smith, Andre Randall, and Edouard Haba (middle).

As the Multi-Door team made the shift to working remotely from home in March to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone, new challenges, as well as new opportunities, came with the new territory. We have developed plans to adapt to a new routine and work environment and found new ways of staying connected. Every week for the past four months, team members have shared pictures of their experiences while working remotely. Here are a few stories and pictures from team members who are currently working from home, and doing it successfully.

Right: Team members laughing and wearing their favorite hat at a themed Civil ADR Branch meeting. The Branch meets regularly to discuss program updates and check-in on team members.



Left: Family ADR Branch staff wearing face masks at one of their virtual branch meetings.

“[T]he biggest challenge (of remote operations) has been the loss of face-to-face interaction and social engagement with the team, which we have learned to adapt by having more meetings and team activities on WebEx and Microsoft Teams. Among these activities have been popular “Brain Teasers” initiated by Case Manager Jennifer Payden and a Book Club initiated by [Family] Staff Mediator Dan Nau and Case Manager Zeljana Varga.”  
—Matthew Centeio-Bargasse, Family ADR Branch Chief



Above: Edouard Haba, Family Staff Mediator, working and playing dentist with his youngest son.

For many of us, working from home has meant sharing desk space with kids, having furry friends participate in conference calls, or working from a make-shift home office at the dining table—while working longer hours too.



Above: Telma Giron, Administrative Assistant, sharing her workspace with her two daughters.

“ It was really nice spending a few moments with Andre after being away from all of my co-workers in the office for so long,” commented Joan Burrell, Family ADR Case Manager, on her unexpected encounter with colleague Andre Randall, Civil ADR Program Officer, at a Black Lives Matter protest in Washington, D.C.



## Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division

410 E Street NW  
Suite 2900  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Phone: 202-879-1549  
Fax: 202-879-9456



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Editor: Lizbeth Carrillo  
410 E St. NW, Suite 2900  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
202-879-2944  
Lizbeth.Carrillo@dcsc.gov



**Above: U.S. Capitol Building at sunset, photo courtesy of  
Jeannie Adams**

