
Kluwer Arbitration Blog

ARBinBRIEF: New Initiative Kicking Off With A Group Of Trailblazers

ARBinBRIEF · Saturday, October 2nd, 2021

This week has seen the launch of a new initiative – ARBinBRIEF. ARBinBRIEF is a practical video guide on handpicked arbitration issues. ARBinBRIEF aims to provide a concise, yet very informative insight into arbitration-related topics to all members of the arbitration community. The ARBinBRIEF series is divided into seasons consisting of 10 episodes each. Each episode will be recorded during a 15-minute live conversation between two stellar arbitrators and will be made available on the ARBinBRIEF [YouTube channel](#). The episodes will air every fortnight. Attendees of the live event will be able to participate in a (non-recorded) Q&A and networking session thereafter.

The kick-off

ARBinBRIEF is a practical video guide that aims to deal with handpicked issues in arbitration. For the kick off event though, the founders of the series decided to take a different approach and learn from those who opted to pursue paths less taken. There is no recipe for success, but success definitely leaves clues. And the panellists left plenty of them. The discussion focused on highlighting the diverse career paths of the speakers, their dedication to initiatives that benefit the entire arbitration community and aim to challenge the status quo, as well as provide for a fulfilling and meaningful professional path.

The kick off took place on 29 September 2021, with a panel titled “Trailblazers: Ambition Meets Extraordinary” featuring a group of extraordinary individuals who have opted for different paths in pursuing their careers and have sought to achieve a purpose that goes beyond themselves:

- [Nadja Harraschain](#) (Founder of [breaking.through](#), Rechtsreferendarin);
- [Amani Khalifa](#) (Counsel at [Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP](#), Member of the ERA Pledge Steering Committee);
- [Madeline C. Kimei](#) (Founder and CEO of [iResolve](#), President of the [Tanzania Institute of Arbitrators](#));
- [Rekha Rangachari](#) (Executive Director of the [NYIAC](#), Co-founder and co-chair of [R.E.A.L.](#) – Racial Equality for Arbitration Lawyers initiative);
- [Isabel Yishu Yang](#) (Founder and CEO of [ArbiLex](#)).

Olga Hamama (Co-Founder and Partner of [V29 Legal](#)) moderated the panel.

Surround yourself with role models

Olga started off by remarking that success does not have a fixed recipe. Each path is distinct and extraordinary in its own way. Nadja, as the founder of [breaking.through](#), is one of the people making such diversity visible with her platform.

When Nadja first entered the world of big law fresh out of law school, she noticed that there was a disparity between the number of men and women at the top. Many women would give up on the career of their dreams because they did not see enough role models at the top – someone they could learn from and go to for advice and guidance. That is when the idea for Nadja’s initiative was born. [breaking.through](#) publishes portraits of such role models, providing their insights on career-related questions. Within just three years, the platform has become the biggest career platform for women in the field of law in Germany and Switzerland. Because of this success, the team has now grown to 30 members working on additional services offered by [breaking.through](#) – events and workshops targeted at developing soft skills as well as mentoring opportunities.

Dedicate yourself over time and apply yourself

Amani did not start off her career as a lawyer. Law was her “Plan B” while she pursued her passion as a professional tennis player.

Having been confronted with poor remuneration and a short “shelf-life” as a tennis player, Amani decided to go back to her “Plan B” and pursue law. A lot of what she learned through tennis formed her into the successful lawyer she is today. Two aspects from those days as a tennis player have particularly influenced her career:

- the repetitive nature of training where you do not see the results right away and only years later looking back do you realize that you have the tools to achieve what you want if you chisel away at something long enough; and
- time management skills by learning how to organise her time as an athlete while at the same time continuing her schoolwork.

Amani has now found her way back to sports by acting as an arbitrator on the Basketball Arbitral Tribunal (BAT) and as an anti-corruption hearing officer of the Tennis Integrity Unit. In this context, she spoke about serendipity because the opportunity to come back to sports came only by chance –while substituting a speaker at a DIS40 event and meeting a colleague who ultimately paved the way to her appointment as an arbitrator at BAT.

Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you

Rekha spoke about her experience with building something new – the [New York International Arbitration Center](#). As a non-profit organization, NYIAC promotes and enhances the conduct of

international arbitration in New York, offers educational programming, and operates arbitration hearing facilities. When Rekha was offered the role of an Executive Director, she did not know what it meant to work for NYIAC but knew that it offered an opportunity to build something up and grow while doing it. She did not hesitate to jump and take on the challenge.

In 2021, Rekha co-founded the [Racial Equality for Arbitration Lawyers \(R.E.A.L.\)](#) initiative along with other prominent practitioners and diversity advocates. In her words, “*it is time to talk about race in the international arbitration community*”. By co-founding the [R.E.A.L.](#) initiative, Rekha started by simply building a community that would talk about racial issues in arbitration and would slowly build itself and spread the word around. The [R.E.A.L.](#) initiative has now grown to a network of committees and ambassadors promoting its goals around the globe. It also offers scholarships that can be used for a variety of things from courses and workshops to just event attendance – providing opportunities to professionals that would otherwise be beyond reach.

Remain resilient and adapt to change

Madeline shared her passion for technology – she always wanted to work in a technology-driven environment. Having started her career in-house working in banking and seeing the need to provide solutions for resolution of disputes, she embraced the opportunity and set up one of the very first online dispute resolution platforms in Tanzania – [iResolve](#).

Madeline shared how working in banking exposed her to the rapid pace of technology and a world where regulation was always lagging behind technological progress. When setting up her own law firm, that gap between regulation and progress made her think about how she could add value to her clients – and that is when [iResolve](#) was born. Initially a case management solution, it has now developed into a platform that facilitates mediation, arbitration, and adjudication processes.

Although initially there were challenges in convincing clients to use the platform to manage disputes, in the meantime virtual platforms have been embraced following the pandemic. Madeline’s resilience – the ability to adapt to changes in the face of market and consumer demands, constantly challenging the status quo – was key to her success.

The same virtues contributed to a successful development of the [Tanzania Institute of Arbitrators \(TIA\)](#). In her position as President, Madeline fuelled the developed TIA and arbitration in Tanzania by working with the government and the parliament for the (now adopted) new Tanzanian arbitration law.

Have a beginner’s mindset

According to her own description, a “Harvard Lawyer, Oxford Economist turned Founder of [ArbiLex](#) passionate about ‘predicting’ law “, Isabel, provided insights into her founder’s journey.

Isabel came up with the idea for [ArbiLex](#) after observing how decisions were made at the outset of investor-State cases. These crucial decision-making moments typically revolve around risk assessment. Having a degree in both law and economics allowed Isabel to see that risk differently and spot a business opportunity.

According to Isabel, the structure of ISDS case law lends itself to probabilistic modelling. The idea was therefore to quantify the risks unique to the case in such a way that would be understood by financiers. [ArbiLex](#) therefore offers prediction services quantifying case risks using machine learning and game theory-inspired models. The venture has now grown further from its inception and offers arbitration finance in addition to the tech-enabled intelligence.

Isabel also noted that law is one of the areas that is slow to adopt new technologies, but the job of an innovator is to understand which groups within the larger sector are the early adopters, the followers, and those that will never adopt the technology. One would only need to find allies among the early adopters and people who share your vision to start.

In a very limited time, the speakers provided a lot of insights and useful guidance for any person pursuing a career in international arbitration and beyond. A combination of personal qualities, expertise, and ability to respond to the challenges and everchanging circumstances were just some of the qualities these extraordinary professionals share. As envisaged, the kick-off event captured the spirit of ARBinBRIEF – an attempt to challenge the status quo and develop a practical offering for the arbitration community while carefully listening and responding to the feedback of the users.

For all who missed the event, the recording will be available on the [ARBinBRIEF YouTube channel](#).

The recording of the first episode of Season 1, featuring Wendy Miles and Jennifer Bryant discussing arbitrator appointments will take place on Wednesday 13 October at 3pm CEST.

If you want to keep up to date on the upcoming ARBinBRIEF episode recordings, you can follow ARBinBRIEF on [LinkedIn](#), subscribe to the [ARBinBRIEF YouTube channel](#), or get in touch via email. The ARBinBRIEF team – [Elizabeth Chan](#), [Nata Ghibradze](#), [Nadja Harraschain](#), [Olga Hamama](#), [Emily Hay](#), [Iuliana Iancu](#), [Dara Sahab](#), [Olga Sendetska](#), [Mrinalini Singh](#), [Vanessa Zimmermann de Meireles](#) – would be grateful for the support of our community and any feedback along the way.

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