

ArbitralWomen President Starts Solo Arbitration Practice

By **Diamond Naga Siu**

Law360 (August 6, 2021, 3:15 PM EDT) -- Dana MacGrath, president of ArbitralWomen and most recently in-house counsel for litigation funder Omni Bridgeway, is launching a full-time independent solo arbitrator practice in late August, she announced.

MacGrath told Law360 Thursday she has always wanted to start her own practice and that the most difficult part was recognizing that now was the right time.

"A lot of people do it later, and I'm an advocate for people doing it earlier as part of the Rising Arbitrators Initiative and others," said MacGrath, a longtime diversity advocate.



Dana MacGrath

MacGrath said people who gave her advice on launching an independent arbitrator practice all said it was the "perfect next step" for her.

"I built a career in the arbitration space over the last two decades as an arbitration practitioner and arbitrator and then in-house to make sure that I had a really diverse skill set and different experiences in the arbitration space before going independent," MacGrath said.

She was in-house counsel for nearly three years at Omni Bridgeway, a global litigation and arbitration finance company, and before that was a partner at Sidley Austin LLP. MacGrath also spent time at Allen & Overy LLP, O'Melveny & Myers LLP and Sullivan & Cromwell LLP.

She is heavily involved in a variety of groups that aim to overhaul the traditional methods of arbitration, including serving on the Equal Representation in Arbitration Pledge steering committee, the Racial Equity for Arbitration Lawyers steering committee and the Campaign for Greener Arbitrations North America committee.

Kabir Duggal of Arnold & Porter, a co-chair of Racial Equity for Arbitration Lawyers, has worked with MacGrath in a variety of capacities. He told Law360 that she is "one of the definitive global leaders" for diversity and said arbitrations worldwide are more inclusive largely because of her work.

"What makes her very unique is the critical role that she plays in leadership positions with organizations," Duggal said. "It's just hard to believe how one person can do everything that she does,

and she does it so effectively."

MacGrath said she fortuitously fell into arbitration after she was tasked with researching an arbitration matter early in her career. She became part of the team for the case and said she has been doing arbitrations ever since.

"Arbitration really affords the parties an ability to work out their disputes in a much more amicable way than litigation — now that's not to say that every court litigation is super adversarial," MacGrath said. "But for the most part, arbitration is a much more collegial setting in which to work out a dispute and achieve a result."

She has worked on a wide array of commercial international and domestic arbitrations and stresses the importance of diversity in practice. She said that working alone, she looks forward to no longer worrying about conflicts of interests while taking on clients, as many people have to at a large firm.

"I never know what new, exciting cases are around the corner, in the same way that I didn't know when I entered law that I would love international arbitration," MacGrath said. "I didn't know much about it, and now I know I love it."

--Editing by Patrick Reagan.