
Kluwer Mediation Blog

Whisper It Quietly?

Bill Marsh (Editor) (Bill Marsh Mediator) · Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015

This is a blog I have shied away from writing. Several times. Even now, as I do so, I am wary of it. But here goes. I'll come right out with it.

Very few women feature on the lists of "top" commercial mediators.

This year's [Who Who Legal World's Top Ten](#) features precisely....none. Seriously? Come off it.

Perhaps it was a mistake? Nope. Check out this year's [UK Legal 500](#). Three of the top twenty are women. This year's [UK Chambers Directory](#)? Four of the top nineteen (though with a big shout for Frances Maynard who tops the list).

Now, I am no student of gender politics or history. And I don't think of myself as a feminist, or a misogynist, or any other relevant "-ist". I'm not trying to make any of those points. I'm just a mediator. But I am a mediator who cares about our profession and who recognises that women seem to be grossly under-represented in its top echelons.

We can all speculate on the reasons, and we can all suggest responses. I intend to do neither. That is for sociologists, gender experts, historians, rights campaigners or whomever.

I simply want to do two things:

1. To say it out loud; and
2. To remind us that it is not so everywhere in the world.

When I first started working on mediation in Russia in the late 1990s, I found (to my great surprise, coming from the UK) that the majority of leading mediators whom I met were women. And then I found the same in Slovakia. And then again in Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. And most recently in Belarus. And if I may speak frankly, I have witnessed courageous and visionary leadership on offer from the women mediators in those countries. They carry the hopes and fears of many on their shoulders, not just for the growth of a new profession, but for a better way of doing things in sometimes tough circumstances. They seem willing to counter the prevailing cultural wisdom in a radical and moving way.

Yes of course these are gross generalisations, not statistically-founded research outcomes. But they are still my very clear impressions.

At the highest political level, [United Nations Security Council resolution 1325](#) (adopted 31st

October 2000) “reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”. You could hardly wish for a clearer clarion call or statement of priority.

This year’s Coventry Cathedral International Peace and Reconciliation Prize went to Thérèse Mema Mapenzi from the Justice and Peace Commission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for her work with victims of sexual violence.

And of course we all know that Malala Yousafzai received the 2014 Nobel Peace prize, alongside Kailash Satyarthi.

I am not arguing for a particular answer or response. I am simply asking out loud whether the commercial mediation profession, at least in some parts of the World, is missing out on some much needed talent, and has something to learn from other areas of mediation and peace-making.

Of course in today’s politically correct world, one hardly dare argue some of these points or risk dipping a toe into the shark-infested waters of gender politics. One hardly even dare make reference to gender, along with race and creed.

On the other hand, sometimes these things just need to be said.

Reactions, please?

To make sure you do not miss out on regular updates from the Kluwer Mediation Blog, please [subscribe here](#).

Profile Navigator and Relationship Indicator

Includes 7,300+ profiles of arbitrators, expert witnesses, counsels & 13,500+ relationships to uncover potential conflicts of interest.

Learn how **Kluwer Arbitration** can support you.

Learn more about the newly-updated *Profile Navigator and Relationship Indicator*



This entry was posted on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015 at 9:00 am and is filed under [Appointment of Mediators](#), [Availability of Mediators](#), [Bias](#), [Commercial Mediation](#), [Dispute Resolution](#), [Future of mediation](#), [Gender](#), [General](#), [Practical Challenges for Mediators](#)

You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.