

Salim Uqdah

Uroboros Mediations, Owner & Dispute Resolution Professional

AGE:

30

WHERE WERE YOU BORN:

Bronx, New York

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CHARLOTTE AREA:

17 years

TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT YOU:

I'm an only child of an interfaith marriage that led to a divorce. When we moved to Charlotte, I lived in a multi-generational household, and I spent most of my adolescence as part of a caretaking team for my grandmother who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis. I went to North Mecklenburg High School, go Vikings, and then High Point University, go Panthers. I am an Olympic conversationalist, but just as good of a listener. I'm warm, excessive, and I have a tendency to envelop people in my presence. Most importantly, I'm trying to make the world a better place than it was when I first entered it. It's an ongoing process. I truly believe that dispute resolution methods are the best vehicle to alleviate conflict, discord and confusion. Mediation, collaborative law, and coaching services are beneficial to the public. People need to be educated about the methods to adequately utilize them in business, work, or in their personal lives.

DURING YOUR TIME VOLUNTEERING FOR A COMMUNITY ACTIVITY OR PROJECT, WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MOMENT:

The crowning jewel of my professional life was creating two eviction diversion programs during the pandemic. My business partner, Amy L. Cox Gruendel and I were able to help approximately 75 families to stay in their home during the eviction moratorium in 2020 and 2021. We completed that project by working with the Mecklenburg County court system, landlords, tenants, law firms, NC Legal Aid Charlotte, and Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy. I believe engaging in community is wrapping your arms around your fellow man to build something grander than you.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY? PLEASE BE AS DETAILED AS YOU CAN:

I consistently engaged in volunteer activities since I moved to North Carolina. I volunteered at Huntersville Oaks Nursing Home when I was a teenager. I conducted civic volunteer activities in college, which led me to do some volunteer work on and off when I move back to Charlotte. I am proud that I am now a board member of three nonprofits, Playing for Others, Care Ring, and the North Carolina Civil Collaborative Law Association.

Playing for Others is a nonprofit that helps with teen development through creative arts, which I very much enjoy. Care Ring is a nonprofit that helps underinsured and uninsured Mecklenburg residents access healthcare, which allows for a healthier community. Lastly, the North Carolina Civil Collaborative Law Association promotes collaborative law (a more amicable alternative to litigation) to the greater legal community and the public for domestic or civil matters.

PLEASE LET US KNOW ANY AWARDS OR RECOGNITIONS YOU'VE RECEIVED IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

I have a slew of certifications, which varies in rarity. I own the only dispute resolution companies in the nation that are LGBTQ Certified Business Enterprises and majority black-owned. I am one of the few black male divorce coaches in my certifying body. I'm in the process of creating the Harmony Award for the North Carolina Bar Association's Dispute Resolution Section. Last year, one of the strongest networkers in Business Networking International (BNI) Charlotte Chapters. Lastly, I was the most used mediator for the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources Mediation Program in 2021.

WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES OR INTEREST:

I'm an aesthete, which is displayed by my love of television and film, music, podcasts, pop culture analysis, non-fiction books, and travel. To behold the beauties of the world, we must look outside of ourselves and within simultaneously. I am an extreme extrovert, so I am always talking back and forth with friends in-person on the phone. I work out at ISI Elite Training, and do a little yoga.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE THAT YOU STAND BY?

Instead of a New Year resolution, I typically land on a mantra to adhere to throughout the year. This year's mantra is "everything is a luxury, and nothing is a necessity." It allows me to be grounded in myself, while being humbled by the embarrassment of riches that I have received in the last 30 years, including this honor.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS? 10 YEARS?

In the next five years, I see myself doing more speaking engagements and trainings about conflict resolution; working with small to midsize companies, government agencies, or non-profits with internal disputes regarding vendors, employees and suppliers. I would like approximately 40 to 60 hours of mediation work per month, and 30 divorce coaching clients. Maybe take a sabbatical in Johannesburg, the Netherlands or Singapore in the summer. Invest in some CAT bonds.

In ten years, I hope to write a book or two and conduct a TedTalk. have a podcast or a YouTube channel talking about dispute resolution in a salt-of-the-earth fashion. I want to work with some large Fortune 500 companies developing dispute system designs, consulting, sourcing of dispute resolution professionals. Have a chic condo with a long-term partner with a revolving door of guests. Maybe take a mixology/botany course.

CAN YOU SHARE ONE THING THAT IS ON YOUR BUCKET LIST:

It would be fun to help fund a Cultural Supper Club. A large venue that could double as a dining establishment and cultural community center. It would be wonderful to have Dosas and other South Indian food alongside a showing of "Lagaan", or Fellini's "Divorce Italian Style" with Sicilian cuisine, or invite Mdou Mocatsar or Flogging Molly to do a set. Anything to stoke peoples wanderlust and curiosity about the vastness of the world. The concept is there, but execution would be challenging.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU USED YOUR PASSPORT?

Australia 2019 during the bushfires. It was a marvelous time despite the smoky situation.

WHAT IS A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF THAT NO ONE KNOWS?:

That's hard. I'm an open book.

WHO IS YOUR HERO?

I don't fixate on a single individual because hero-worship usually leads to disappointment, but I rather focus on exemplary qualities that multiple people possess to become my best self. The precision of written and spoken

words from James Baldwin is worthy of emulation. The artful way that Priya Parker sets up a social gathering to foster connection is the gold standard that I want to enact in my own life. Bell Hooks' thoughtfulness of leading life with an "Ethic of Love" is so admirable and needed. I aspire to reach the effortless gentleness of my two best friends, Devin Patel and Devika Sathe. In my profession, Michael Ury, Ketan Soni, Ray Owens, Ann Anderson and Steve Dunn are some exceptional mediators in the field.

WHAT WAS THE LAST BOOK YOU READ?:

A tie between Dispute System Design & Deluxe: How Luxury Lost Its Luster. One for pleasure, one for work. Pro tip: screen-share your ebook on the television. Changed. My. Life.

WHAT WAS THE LAST MOVIE YOU SAW?:

"Resurrection" with Rebecca Hall and Eli Roth at Independent Picture House. Support your local arthouse theaters, people. Marvel Movies can only do so much.

WHAT WAS THE LAST CONCERT YOU SAW?:

Khruangbin at the Metro Charlotte Amphitheater officially, but unofficially, a little jam band during Frederick, Maryland's 4th of July Celebration. Both were sublime.

HOW DID THE COVID PANDEMIC EFFECT YOUR PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?:

Greatly. The pandemic was a very pivotal moment in my life. I was at a crossroad in my business, I had two very close friendships that were in the midst of ending, and the normal distraction of social events, networking groups, and busy work abruptly halted. I felt really alone.

As an only child, you're familiar to the feeling, but going through a crisis on this magnitude single and childless yields a different understanding of your own humanity...and you question yourself. How are you showing up? Is it serving you? Are you giving yourself and people around you some grace? Did I go about things the wrong way? It's sobering, but necessary. I think the pandemic allowed me to be more tender, self-assured, and forgiving. We all made it through this plague, so why not enjoy each other and savor each moment. We're all that we have.

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