



Media Contacts:

Michael C. Clark
American Arbitration Association
+1.212.716.3903
marketing@adr.org

Laura Simpson
JConnelly
+1.973.713.8834
aaa@jconnelly.com

AAA® Welcomes 11th Class of Higginbotham Fellows to New York for a Week of ADR Education, Mentorship & Networking

American Arbitration Association® Organizes Weeklong Symposium in New York Headquarters to Empower 20 Diverse Up-and-Coming Legal Professionals to Forge Careers in ADR

NEW YORK, N.Y.—May 9, 2023—The American Arbitration Association (AAA®) announces that the 11th class of participants in its A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. Fellows Program have begun a week of intensive training and seminars in the organization’s New York headquarters. This class of Higginbotham Fellows—which includes 20 up-and-coming legal professionals from groups traditionally underrepresented in the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) field— will receive intensive training on all aspects of ADR as well as resources, networking, and mentorship opportunities throughout the year.

To learn more about the program, please visit <https://www.adr.org/higginbothamfellowsprogram>.

This year’s Higginbotham Fellows Program training coincides with the AAA’s Annual Board of Directors meeting. This timing enables the Fellows to interact with members of the American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution® (AAA-ICDR®) Board of Directors and Council Members at special events in New York.

“As a proud alumna of the Higginbotham Fellows Program, I can personally attest to what a valuable experience it can provide to diverse professionals in the legal community—who, like myself, have a strong interest in ADR and may want to consider mediation and/or arbitration as a career option,” said **Ingeuneal Gray, Esq., Vice President of the American Arbitration Association and Co-Chair of the AAA’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**. “The events we have planned this week for the latest class of Higginbotham Fellows will open their eyes to the positive impact they can make as arbitrators and mediators, and connect them with mentors at the AAA who can guide them toward success in their areas of interest.”

The one-year Higginbotham, Jr. Fellows Program was established by the AAA in 2009 to help more women and ethnically/racially diverse legal professionals begin careers in arbitration and mediation. Its namesake, Judge Aloysius Leon Higginbotham, Jr., was a prominent African-American civil rights advocate, Presidential advisor, educator, humanitarian, and jurist dedicated to supporting diverse legal talent. In addition to the intense weeklong training at the AAA’s headquarters, participants are required to complete a self-study component, and may receive further training and networking opportunities, including pairings with AAA mentors in their specific ADR areas of interest.



Since its inception 14 years ago, 149 Higginbotham Fellows have completed the program. Almost all of the alumni who applied have joined the AAA Roster of arbitrators and mediators, and many of them have been selected by parties to oversee cases. Several Higginbotham Fellows have also been elected to the AAA-ICDR Council.

The AAA has been actively involved in efforts to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the ADR space since the 1960s. Recent initiatives include:

- The AAA held its second Diverse Student ADR Summit at its New York headquarters from November 12-13, 2022. The Summit enabled law students from diverse backgrounds to learn how to begin successful careers as arbitrators and mediators from experienced ADR professionals.
- The organization signed the [Ray Corollary Initiative™ \(RCI™\) Pledge for ADR Providers](#), an industry initiative to increase the number of diverse arbitrators, mediators, and other neutrals, earlier this year. The goals of the Ray Corollary Initiative are consistent with the AAA's goals of increasing diversity in ADR, and that commitment is demonstrated by AAA's ability over the past few years to achieve an average of over 30% diversity on its Roster lists provided to parties.
- Last year, 35% of arbitrators selected by parties from lists of potential neutrals generated by the AAA met diversity criteria—and 41% of new additions to the AAA Roster were women and ethnically/racially diverse professionals.
- This year, the AAA formally raised the diversity threshold in its case management tool (which includes Disability, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation criteria in addition to Race/Ethnicity and Gender) from 20% to 30% to better reflect its practice.

For more information about the AAA's extensive DEI initiatives, please visit <https://www.adr.org/dei>.

“Change is not instantaneous—it requires a consistent effort over the long term,” said **Ann Lesser, Esq., Vice President of the American Arbitration Association and Co-Chair of the AAA's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee**. “Our Higginbotham Fellows Program is just one of the many ways in which we have taken the lead in creating a more diverse and inclusive ADR field. Every Fellow who completes this program is another diverse professional who can make a big difference.”

About the American Arbitration Association

The not-for-profit American Arbitration Association® (AAA®) is the leading provider of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services for parties in commercial disputes, having administered more than seven million ADR cases since its founding in 1926. With 29 offices in the United States, in addition to Singapore, the AAA provides organizations of all sizes in virtually every industry with ADR services and products. For more information, visit www.adr.org.