

Sotomayor Law

Rande S. Sotomayor, Esq.

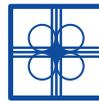


Mediation, Arbitration and Business Dispute Services

What's in a Logo?

May 5, 2017

In 2010, when I opened my mediation practice, I was excited about selecting a logo to help “brand” my business. I was transitioning from what was principally a litigation practice to the business of helping parties make peace. At the printing shop, the owner placed before me a GIANT book of symbols; it was probably three inches thick. While I fanned through the pages, one caught my eye:



I couldn't take my eyes off of it. It seemed to represent everything that I confront, manage, and strive for in mediation: paths that diverge yet come together, a central core, opposing images and tracks, balance, equality, closure, beautiful symmetry, simple elements, complex interactions, and even a gift. To me, the gift is one of resolution and peace.

Fast forward seven years. Recently, I was returning to Los Angeles from Baltimore, where I had a special visit with my family. I rarely speak to those sitting next to me, but for some reason – most likely the really FUN Southwest flight attendant who had a gift for creating Moscow Mules with airplane-galley ingredients – I met a very special woman, a senior advisor at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This lady took one look at the logo on my card and exclaimed how similar it is to a number of West African “Adinkra” symbols she intends to use with her team.

So off I went to the internet, of course, to look at the various symbols that might resemble my logo.

As explained by Mawuna Remarque Koutonin, “Adinkra are visual symbols, originally created by the Ashanti of Ghana and the Gyaman of Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa. They represent concepts or aphorisms, and are extensively used in fabrics, pottery, logos and advertising. The symbols have a decorative function but also represent objects that encapsulate evocative messages that convey traditional wisdom, aspects of life or the environment.”¹

When I saw the following four symbols, and their meanings, I was amazed. Take a look:



Mpatapo – “knot of pacification/reconciliation’ – symbol of reconciliation, peacemaking and pacification. Mpatapo represents the bond or knot that binds parties in a dispute to a peaceful, harmonious reconciliation. It is a symbol of peacemaking after strife.”²

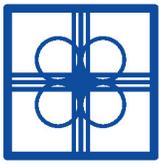
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Rande S. Sotomayor, Esq.

466 Foothill Blvd., #162 | La Cañada, CA 91011

Phone: 626-791-5519 | Fax: 626-794-3789 | Mobile: 626-616-5843

E-mail: Rande@SotomayorLaw.com | Website: www.SotomayorLaw.com



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Dwennimmen – “ram’s horns’ – symbol of humility together with strength. The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble.”³



Nkyimu – “the crossed divisions made on adinkra cloth before stamping - symbol of skillfulness, precision. Before adinkra cloth is stamped with the symbols, the artisan blocks off the cloth with lines in a rectangular grid using a broad-tooth comb. This preparation is symbolic of the exacting technique which results in the highest quality product.”⁴



Kuronti ne Akwamu (two councils of state) – “Democracy, sharing ideas, taking council”⁵

Now I ask you, could I have chosen a better symbol for the work I do in business mediation, at least from the point of view of certain West African nations?

The framework, Kuronti ne Akwamu, involves sharing ideas, standing on equal footing, and collecting advice, wisdom, and collective guidance. The mediation process is the framework for collaborative efforts to share ideas and solutions.

I would contend that Nkyimu (the crossed divisions) stands for the importance of thorough preparation so that the attorneys, the parties, and the mediator can take a skillful, precise approach to achieve a high quality outcome of the dispute.

Dwennimmen (the ram’s horns) demonstrates what happens in mediation as opposed to litigation. While litigators will fight fiercely in the courtroom or arbitration context, in mediation, combining that strength with enough respect and humility to listen so as to imagine another’s point of view opens the door to sharing ideas and exploring solutions.

Mtatapo, the knot of reconciliation and pacification, is the endgame and the Adinkra symbol most strongly reflected in my logo. It is the symbol of the agreement resolving the dispute, the achievement of peace. This is a symbol of an important accomplishment.

Was all this a coincidence? I certainly had never heard of Adinkra symbols, nor had I ever seen any when I developed my logo seven years ago. I think there are certain images that evoke the feelings driving people’s dreams and goals. Images inspire. Images draw you in, often in ways that words cannot.

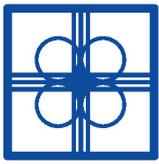
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The work of mediation is a true art in itself. The mediator must create and safeguard a process in which all parties can fairly “have their day in court” on equal footing, allow demonstration of well-prepared, even “ferocious” (though polite) advocacy, educate and encourage the participants to see the tangible value of listening to understand their opponent’s point of view, engage the parties diplomatically, and seek solutions that will achieve resolution and peace.

This is what I do, with all the energy and passion that I have.



¹ <http://www.siliconafrika.com/african-symbols-for-creative-design/>

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ <http://www.adinkrasymbols.org/list-adinkra-symbols/>

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