

# Building Cultural Awareness in Family Law Mediation

Presented by Iris Ramos, Attorney at Law

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# Format

- Preliminary Introductions
- Discussion on Key Points
- Case Sample
- Dialogue/Informal

# Preliminary Questions

- If you feel comfortable only, please put on chat:
  - If you speak another language
  - If you've lived outside of the United States
  - If you work or have worked with immigrants

# Goals

- Create an open and respectful dialogue to help raise cultural awareness
- Help build more empathy and understanding of others' experiences
- Combining the above-put into practice to help you become a more effective mediator with diverse individuals and experiences
- And of course, answer any questions

# About Me

- Native of Puerto Rico and Native Spanish Speaker
- Owner of The Law Office of Iris Ramos LLC
- Practice Areas
  - Family
  - Immigration Law
  - Rule 114 and SENE provider
- Clients Served
- Information from my personal experience only-varies

# Building Awareness

## **Assumptions** in Family Law by:

- Court
- Mediation Providers
- Counsel

## **Legitimate** Fears and Reservations

- Leading with Compassion and Awareness
  - Trauma
  - Immigration status (or lack thereof)

## Cultural **Stigmas**- Awareness, Respect, Understanding for Different Experiences and Redirecting in Respectful Way

- Mental health
- Corporal Punishment
- Children's roles



## **Perceived** Inaction and Issues with Access to Legal Process/Representation

- All documents provided or needed to initiate matter are in English
- Access to native Spanish speaking family attorneys
- Funds
- Self Help Center
- Issues with Technology
- Interpreting

## Gender **Expectations**

- DV
- Men as Victims of DV
- Sexism
- Shaming
- Gender roles in the home

# Scenario

John Doe is a native Spanish speaker from Mexico. He owns a construction business, working twelve hour days, six days a week. He begins a relationship with Jane Doe, another native Spanish speaker, who immigrated from Honduras. They are together for six years and have a son. They have an acrimonious break up when the child is four years old. The child is a U.S. citizen.

John Doe files a custody action a year after the parties separated to establish his parental rights. Dad is saying mom left with the child and refused to allow him to see him all this time, so he had no recourse than to sue her.

Mom is refusing any parenting time to father. She instead states that he hasn't made any efforts to see his son in over a year and has not provided child support to her. And now he just wants to show up and be a father a year later? She also tells you the father was deported around six years ago (when they met), that he came back illegally and is still here illegally. Father tells you that she was unfaithful, was with many other men and that he is concerned about the influence she will have on their child. He is also concerned about her aggressive temper. Mother says she's not "crazy" or aggressive and she's fine. That he is the controlling one. How would you mediate this scenario?

# Questions?

- Contact Information

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