ARTICLE

Anatomy of an Acquittal — Delayed Vindication

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At the very end of the series Mad Men, the yoga instructor encourages his class, which includes the show's protagonist, Don Draper, with the following words: "A new day. New ideas. A new you."

From the perspective of the defense team at least, that's a fitting introduction to the retrial of *United States v. Hamilton*, which resulted last week in an acquittal on all charges of conspiracy to commit bribery and two substantive counts of bribery.

In the retrial, the government tried precisely the same case it tried four years ago. And why not? That case resulted in a conviction on three of four charges, which led to an
eight-year prison sentence imposed by the district court.

It's been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result. We felt little risk of falling victim to that, as neither of us had tried the case the first time around, so we came to this with fresh eyes.

Still, we knew that, to have a chance at a different result, we had to do things differently. And not just different for the sake of difference. We needed, somehow, to try the case in a meaningfully different way. We had to find a way to confront allegations and evidence that *The Dallas Morning News* called "damning."

And damning it was. In 2018, our client, Ruel Hamilton, had been captured on hidden video and audio recordings writing a $7,000 check to a sitting city council member. In 2015, he had been recorded discussing his real estate business — for hours — with another city council member and talking about various payments to her.

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