



MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Maya Kotob

Year of Call : 2018

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QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

I mainly practice 'mental health law' both in the civil and criminal contexts. I first became interested in mental health law in the course of my LLB and LLM studies back in the UK. But I was mainly interested in the academic side of things and never really knew or thought about what the actual practice of mental health law would look like. When I moved to Toronto, I had the opportunity to shadow a

mental health law course as part of the University of Toronto. Anita Szigeti gave a guest lecture in one of the classes. I left the class thinking “THIS is what I want to do”. One year later I was lucky enough to start articling at Anita’s firm and I’ve been working there ever since!

2- What type of cases do you enjoy defending the most and why?

Is it bad to say the wins?

There’s no better feeling than the one when you get to tell someone that they’re now free.

Wins can be a few and far between, but they make it all worth it.

3- How did the practice of criminal law change you?

In more ways than I can put to paper. It has truly exposed me to how tough some people have it. How hard life can be. How unjust it is. How the system can be stacked against them. This has made me a bit more cynical, but also a lot more passionate.

4- What advice would you give to your younger self when you first started practising criminal law?

Do your best, always. But then, move on.

5- How do you deal with bad work days?

A good dose of Modern Family. And a Burger King meal.

6- What do you think of Zoom court?

It made the impossible possible in the midst of a global pandemic.

Having said that, I hate it.

I miss everything about in person hearings. I miss meeting clients, I miss being physically next to them in the hearing room, I miss seeing other lawyers. Most of all, I miss small talk. Who knew I'd ever miss talking about the weather?

(disclaimer: I am typing this out at the height of my burn-out from the pandemic, so...it might be having an impact on my answers...)

7- Any embarrassing court story you're willing to share?

I once joined a hearing with my bitmoji as my display picture. I couldn't remove it during the hearing, so for a full 1.5 hours, I was a cartoon.

8- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?

Quite honestly, I am inspired by the criminal bar as a whole. The collegiality of the defence bar is unmatched. A pleasure to learn from.

But of course, I need to specifically mention Anita Szigeti, who has mentored me since day 1. Her advocacy is never anything less than zealous, passionate and unapologetically fierce. I'm lucky to learn from her every day.

9- What's your favourite song?

I would have loved to give a deep or a non-cliché answer. But it is "She will be loved" by Maroon 5.

10- How do you maintain work life balance and how do you deal with the stress of the job?

I don't know that I have one answer to that. But learning to disconnect is vital.

Also, did I mention Modern Family and Burger King?

11- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

The clients. Our clients, particularly those who are detained, were perhaps the hardest hit by COVID. Their resilience is, easily, my biggest inspiration.

12- What do you do outside of the law?

Outside of the law, I love the outdoors, restaurants, and not being subject to a stay-at-home order...