



### MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

#### INTRO :

**Member Name :** Susannah Chung-Alvares

**Year of Call :** 2011

**Twitter Handle:** @susannahchung

**LinkedIn Page:** I don't have one

#### QUESTIONS :

##### **1- How did you get into criminal law?**

While at Osgoode, my friend suggested I complete my practicum with a senior defence lawyer. My interest was piqued by work on a murder file and, in particular, an AIDWYC (now Innocence Canada) brief. I ended up articling with AIDWYC, which naturally gave way to a career in criminal law.

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

Gun and drug possession cases. They often involve Charter applications and the accompanying cross examinations of police officers, which I enjoy. I also enjoy cases where the accused isn't dead to rights.

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

When I see anyone detained by police, I scrutinize the actions of the police.

**4- If there is one thing only you would like to see change in criminal law, what would it be?**

Although it's broader than criminal law, I'd like to see more focus and funding at the front end of that which brings many accused before the courts in the first place. In criminal law, that might mean a movement away from prosecuting minor drug offences, and the addition of robust community and mental health supports. More immediately, I'd like to see a 'K' court (mental health court) in every courthouse.

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

Take the time, if you need, whether it be a pregnant pause to carefully consider what a Jurist may be asking you, a short recess to consider an issue further, or even an adjournment to think through a response over night. This will increase

the chances of your best arguments being made on the record and not just on the drive home.

### **6- How do you deal with bad work days?**

Spamming friends/members of the defence bar.

### **7- What do you think of Zoom court?**

I think it has value and I hope it remains an option where an accused chooses, and especially for set dates. Like many Crown offices, defence practices have their own “systems” too, which are routinely disregarded. Appearing by Zoom allows us to appear in five different courthouses in one day.

### **8- Any embarrassing court story you’re willing to share?**

The time in my early years when I did a client intake call from “Frank” who said we met at 361. I asked him for his last name and what charges he was dealing with. When I asked him for his date of birth, he exclaimed, “What do you need that for?!” ...Turns out he was a very senior, and highly respected, Crown Attorney.

### **9- Who is your role model/inspiration in criminal law?**

Bryan Stevenson. He was my inspiration long before Michael B. Jordan pretended to be him. His perseverance and success fighting unjust systems in Alabama gives perspective on some of my molehill-like challenges in Ontario.

**10- What's your favourite song?**

I have more than a few. It's not a favourite, but a relevant song right now is 'Jail' by Kanye West.

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

My work is something I do and that I'm passionate about, but I don't make it my entire life. I also appreciate that not everything is in my control and no outcome is determined. We can only do our best.

**12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?**

The down-trodden and the system that oppresses them. Reflecting on that is sobering and impels me.

**13- What do you do outside of the law?**

During COVID, I've been frequenting patios with my husband, Byron, and my 2.5 year old son.

**14- What would your defence bar colleagues be surprised to learn about you?**

I was a cellist in a past life.