



MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Rick Frank

QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

I first became interested in criminal law when several of my friends were arrested in high school. One of my (still) best friends was charged as a party to robbery from a convenience store. At his trial, the prosecutor called him a “menace to society”. I knew him as my best friend for a decade, a 16 y.o. Black kid, not a “menace”. It stuck with me and motivated me to become a criminal defence lawyer.

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

I enjoy defending drug and gun cases the most. They are complex, high stakes, and another opportunity to hold the State to account. Often, these cases engage privacy rights, racial profiling, and tunnel vision policing.

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

Criminal law has changed my perception on how we ought to deal with those who commit crimes. I have never been a zealous advocate for incarceration, but since practicing in criminal law, I am a zealous advocate for decarceration.

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

I want criminal law to be less involved in regulating societal disputes. Courts are overburdened because criminal law is used as a blunt instrument to maintain social order. I want the criminal law to be imaginative.

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

I would tell myself that it is a fast and furious learning curve. Learn as much as you can but be mindful of burnout. And, do not be afraid to ask questions.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I vent to my partner, friends, and colleagues. It is cathartic and they form an incredible support system. Sometimes, I just need to set my work aside and sleep.

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom court cannot totally replace in-person court. That being said, we should embrace technology particularly when it increases access to justice. The desires of the defendant ought to take greater prominence, not simply convenience.

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

The first time I appeared in court was for a provincial offences appeal. I was so nervous that I rushed through my script so quickly and the Justice of the Peace interrupted me several times to remind me to slow down. It took 5x longer to get through the appearance.

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

Easy: Justice Lori Ann Thomas, Sherif Foda, Alison Craig, and Selwyn Pieters. Brilliant advocates. Professional and fearless. They exude the best parts of criminal defence lawyers.

10- What's your favourite song?

Right now, I think it is "4 Your Eyez Only" by J. Cole.

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

For me, work life balance is only achievable because of my partner and my employer. My fiancée is an incredible support, keeps me grounded, and is patient when work is exceptionally busy. My employer is mindful of the importance of work life balance not only for my mental health, but for the service to clients: we are all less effective advocates for our clients when we are burnt out.

To be fair, I'm still figuring this all out. Work life balance does not happen by itself.

12– What is your biggest legal inspiration?

The lawyers who employ critical race theory in their practice. Lawyers like Emily Lam, Faisal Mirza, and Nana Yanful, to name only a few, are at the forefront of re-imagining how the law deals with racialized defendants.

13– What do you do outside of the law?

I love cooking and baking. I also play (and watch) basketball.

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

I was arrested at 16 for a crime I did not commit. No one in my family had any legal background and we did not have money to afford a lawyer. As a young, Black boy in the legal system where you feel like nobody is on your side, you feel powerless.