



### **MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS**

#### **INTRO :**

**Member Name :** Amanda Ross

**Year of Call :** 2013

**Twitter Handle:** none (I know, I know)

**LinkedIn Page:** I have one but I haven't updated it in years

#### **QUESTIONS :**

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

I've always had a soft spot for underdogs and for challenging authority. I also love reading, writing and critical argument. I did my undergraduate degree in philosophy and wanted to apply it in the real world (and make a bit of money), so I went to law school. At Osgoode Hall I found my criminal law classes fascinating and joined the student legal clinic (CLASP) in the criminal defence division. I was hooked and never looked back.

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

I enjoy cases with interesting Charter issues. I've run several successful Charter challenges to mandatory minimum sentences and other Criminal Code provisions, and enjoy the creativity of coming up with novel arguments. I'm also very detail oriented so enjoy grappling with complex fact patterns. Fraud cases, drug cases, and technical offences (like perjury, for example) interest me. I also find that some cases are satisfying simply because of the client. When I can be a source of comfort or support or strength to a person who hasn't gotten a fair shake in life or in the legal system, I consider it a win. I also do a lot of sexual assault work and am finding the s. 276/278 regime changes and surrounding issues fascinating, frustrating and complicated.

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

I overcame my deep fear of public speaking! I'm more confident and am unafraid of confrontation. I couldn't have said that as a younger woman. I think I'm also more empathetic and open-minded. Seeing the human side of the criminal law, and how narrow the gap often is in terms of circumstances between a law-abiding citizen and a person charged with a crime, is humbling and eye opening. While I do sometimes feel jaded I think practicing criminal law has driven home the importance of being kind. Everyone is fighting a harder battle than we know.

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

Resources. Both in terms of Legal Aid funding for counsel, and resourcing to address underlying causes of criminality. If the government saw fit to provide adequate housing, education, job training and mental health supports to those who need it, crime rates would drop in a way that can never be achieved by policing.

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

It's a long game and you have to set boundaries. The work can become an all-encompassing thing if you let it.

Also, you deserve to be here. I think crises of self-confidence and a sense of imposter syndrome are common experiences for young lawyers, particularly women. If I could go back I'd tell myself that hard work often beats experience, so find good mentors, work hard, take yourself seriously (but keep a sense of humour) and trust that there's not some magic font of knowledge only accessible to older, white male lawyers. If they can do it so can you.

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

Yoga, good red wine, pasta, sudoku and reality TV.

**7- What do you think of Zoom Court?**

I love it for set date court but hate it for trials and appeals. It's a leap forward in terms of access to justice for most clients in terms of sheer convenience and reducing in person court attendances. But it's vitally important to preserve in person cross-examination and argument. I think in person connection with a judge trumps talking to a screen any day.

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

My husband is a die hard Cleveland Browns football fan (embarrassing in and of itself). Recently I got most of the way through a Zoom court hearing before realizing that I had essentially a shrine to the Cleveland Browns in my background. If anyone is familiar with the track record of the Browns they'll understand that judicial confidence in my judgment was irreparably damaged.

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

Mark Sandler.

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

This is the hardest question! I'll go sentimental and pick my wedding song - "May I Have This Dance" by Francis and the Lights and Chance the Rapper. But recently I've had Toronto locals Majid Jordan playing on repeat.

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

During COVID I've been working primarily at my dining room table so work-life balance has been challenging. I make an effort to create a divide between my personal time and my work time – I let clients know that I don't respond to emails/calls/texts on the weekend unless it's urgent, and I've taken up hobbies and exercise classes to make sure I actively schedule time for myself. Having a supportive network of family, friends and colleagues is indispensable. Nothing eases stress like having criminal law colleagues to trade dark humour and war stories.

### **12– What is your biggest legal inspiration?**

Doing my best to ensure an innocent person is not convicted. The rush of a great cross-examination. The satisfaction of getting an unreasonable adversary to back down. Making new, good law. And making sure that my clients know they aren't alone against the state.

### **13– What do you do outside of the law?**

I'm a (very) amateur potter and pickleball player, and I love chess and sudoku. I've recently fallen in love with a YouTube channel called "Cracking the Cryptic." It features two charming British men who solve complex logic puzzles with genuine enthusiasm and palpable glee. I also love walking and hiking. I recently broke my ankle in a pickleball accident so my athletic career is temporarily on hold, so I'm spending a lot of time reading (currently *The Hours* by Michael Cunningham; *Beautiful World, Where Are You* by Sally Rooney, and Tami Hoag detective thrillers), cooking, and catching up on Netflix.

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

I'm originally from Alberta (I moved to Toronto from Edmonton to go to law school) and maintain an unironically deep and unshakable devotion to country music.