



THE **VOICE** OF
THE **CRIMINAL**
DEFENCE BAR

MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO

Member name: Trevor Lau

Year of Call: 2021

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Questions

1. How did you get into criminal law?

During my final year at law school, I did an internship with the NGO Justice Defenders in Uganda. I went inside prisons and taught law school courses to prisoners as part of a rehabilitation program wherein they worked towards obtaining an LL.B. degree with the University of London. Seeing the conditions of prisons, and hearing the stories of how so many prisoners were

unjustly punished made me realize I wanted my legal career to be devoted to helping people like them.

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

I enjoy anything involving Charter litigation because there is nothing more satisfying than flipping the focus on to the misconduct of the state.

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

It's made me become more aware of how often accused parties are mistreated by police and on occasions, even the Crown. It has also made me more sensitive to people's backgrounds and personal circumstances: being accused of doing a bad thing is not equivalent to being a bad person.

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

A vast increase in court resources. I am always humbled by how hard the court staff work to make all our endeavours possible, and wish there were more resources and time to make their lives easier. This is especially so when so many newly arrested cannot get access to a timely bail.

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

I'm still first starting out so hey, if anybody's got advice, send it my way! But if I could go back in time to my articling stage, I'd tell myself to get used to writing factums. A lot of factums.

6. How do you deal with bad work days?

Fried chicken and a beer. Then a reminder that every failure makes you stronger.

7. What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom court is great for set-date, as you can juggle multiple courts at once and be done pretty quickly. Having articulated entirely during the Zoom court era, I do think it lacks the social aspect that brings defence lawyers together. I hope that when it is safe to do so, all hearings will re-open for in-person court, but we get to keep Zoom court for set-dates.

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

Any time my cat pops up on my Zoom.

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

Ryan Handlarski, my boss. This isn't sucking up, I promise. Because I studied law in the UK then articulated during the Zoom court era, I didn't really know any Canadian criminal lawyers until just recently. When I started working for Ryan, I saw the intensity and vigour in his work. Every oral argument is supplemented by thorough written materials, and his cross-examination can only be described as eloquent. Above all, he is the kind of lawyer who acts with 100% conviction—not the legal kind—to stand up for what he believes in.

10. What's your favourite song?

I listen to a variety of genres so it really depends on the mood. But a few of my favourites include: Pound Signs by Headie One; Run This by Plaza; Holy Terrain by FKA Twigs and Future; Pink by Two Feet. I should probably stop there, or this list will never end.

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

In terms of maintaining work life balance, I prefer to get as much work done as I can on weekdays, and leave weekends free to spend with my friends and family. Everybody works differently, so find a balance that works for you. As for stress, I tend to compartmentalize to separate the grittier part of the job from my personal feelings.

12. What is your biggest legal inspiration?

The recent case of *R. v. Simonelli* [2021] O.J. No. 190 (Ont. Sup. Ct. J.) is one of my favourites because it opens up the remedy of a stay of proceedings for systemic abuses of process. It squarely tackles the issue of a lack of court resources, and I hope to see *Simonelli* applications being granted more often outside the context of delays in getting bail.

13. What do you do outside of the law?

I love cooking and run a (very amateur) foodie Instagram that explores food from around the GTA. Shameless plug: follow @thefoodjunkie.gta to join me on my never-ending bulking season!

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

I was called to the bar at the age of 23.