



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

### MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

#### INTRO :

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**Year of Call :** 2022

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#### QUESTIONS :

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

My undergraduate degree was in criminology, which was incredibly helpful in providing me with a critical perspective on the justice system and in breaking down stereotypes about crime and “criminals”. I started to understand how much crime is driven by personal and social circumstances, and how important it is for defendants to have someone in their corner as they navigate the justice system — especially when it seems like it is them against the world (and it often is). By the time I got to law school, I had developed a very specific interest in criminal law and especially criminal defence. I wanted to help people charged with crimes, hopefully making the criminal process a bit more bearable for them while also making sure that the Crown and the court see them as human beings. I’ve been lucky since then; everything has sort of fallen into place.



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

I love working on cases involving police witnesses. They often raise interesting Charter issues, and also bring into sharp focus some of the inequalities between our clients and the state. The differences in how some of our clients are treated by police can also be staggering, dependent on things like their race, the nature of their charges, and even the characteristics of the individual officers they interact with. Being a police officer is a hard job — one that I don't envy — but it can be shocking to see how some defendants are treated by police at times and how appallingly little regard there is for their rights. On the flip side, I have also seen cases where officers have gone above and beyond in fulfilling their duties to everyone involved in the investigation, including the accused (a win for society, but maybe not so much for criminal defence lawyers...).

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

I have found being a criminal defence lawyer to be immensely humbling. One allegation or interaction with the police, and suddenly a client is sucked into a years-long process that can end up taking over their life. The criminal process takes such a toll on our clients, and their social and financial circumstances are often forever altered by the mere fact that they are charged, let alone what may happen if found guilty. I often stop to think about the prospect of myself or someone I love going through the same process — and to reflect on my own privilege and responsibility, now being the person who helps others through it. I would hope that being a criminal defence lawyer has made me more empathetic and less quick to judge others.



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

There are so many things I would change about our system if I could. If I had to choose one, it would be to properly address the crisis of resources within criminal defence. The fact that many people do not qualify for legal aid funding but are also not wealthy enough to afford retaining a lawyer privately is a massive injustice — one that leads to many people being self-represented or poorly represented in some of the most important moments of their lives. At the same time, the systematic underfunding of legal aid creates disincentives for criminal lawyers to take on those cases; more often than not, defence lawyers trying their best to represent their clients' interests will end up working for free or overwhelming their caseloads just to stay afloat. Comparatively, in recent years we have seen far more funding channeled into police and Crown's offices, which puts defendants at a significant disadvantage. More than anything, I wish I had the power to level that playing field.

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

The first time I stepped into the Court of Appeal building, I was in my first year of law school and competing in a moot. Being 5'0", I was very worried the podium would be too tall for me to see the judges over, so just to be safe, I showed up in gigantic (but still vaguely professional) platform heels. Unnecessary? Yes. Clear line of sight to the entire bench? Also yes.



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

Over the past few years I have learned an invaluable lesson: as a lawyer, taking care of my own physical and mental health is not just a nice thing to have in life, it is actually a professional responsibility. My clients and the other lawyers on my team are counting on me to be at my best — and nobody can be at their best by working 100% of the time. My practice is a top priority, but I also try to keep my social calendar full and I exercise a lot, knowing those things are essential to keep me healthy and happy. Blocking off time for things other than work makes the time I do devote to my work all the more meaningful.