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DEFENCE BAR

MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS

INTRO :

Member Name : Sweta Tejpal

Year of Call : 2015

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QUESTIONS :

1- How did you get into criminal law?

I knew I wanted to be a lawyer, advocating for what was right and just, since I was little. I believed that people who did not have a voice needed someone to stand up for them. I completed my undergrad in Criminology, Justice, and Policy Studies where my professors encouraged my love for law. I volunteered with AIDWYC and later became involved with the Innocence Project in law school. My passion for doing what was right even if the odds were against people grew stronger over the years until I finally realized my goal of becoming Defence Counsel.



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

I like doing appellate work and defending sexual assault cases. Anything that is complex and requires pre-trial motions, putting together well researched and creative legal arguments is enjoyable. I like figuring out ways to piece together the puzzle so that the evidence favours my client.

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

Criminal law to me is much more than advocating, it is about humanity. It has challenged me in ways that no other area of law could. It has helped me appreciate that people are dealing with life challenges along with criminal charges. The court process can be long, and it can have a profound effect on a person, whether you are the client or the lawyer. What matters is fighting the good fight, trying to stay true to myself and not losing my passion for advocacy.

4- If there is one thing you would like to see changed in criminal law, what would it

be?

Better funding so that individuals who are charged with criminal matters have representation. As well, I would like to see a more rehabilitative approach in sentencing.



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

One case at a time. One person at a time is what changes the world.

6- How do you deal with bad work days?

I reflect and problem solve. I also workout, listen to music, and chat with friends.

7- What do you think of Zoom court?

Zoom has really expanded our parameters and provides flexibility for different courts like assignment and bail courts. However, physically stepping into a court for a trial always reminds me of why I became a lawyer.

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

You tell me yours first and I'll think about it.



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

My inspiration growing up was Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Justice Beverley McLachlin, but I am also fortunate to have worked with many colleagues who inspire me in my career.

10- What's your favourite song?

How can I choose just one? It really depends on what is going on in my life. If I had to narrow it down, I would say "The Show Must Go On" by Queen or "Billie Jean" by MJ.

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

Work life balance in our burnout society and profession is something everyone is striving for. Sometimes the job does take over, and when it does, I remind myself to step back and take time for life. Whether that means going to the golf course early in the morning to destress before work in the summer or taking some time off in the winter to ski. Our job is rewarding, but it's also hard, so I'm always striving to find that balance. I am still a work in progress.



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12- What is your biggest legal inspiration?

Acquittals. Seeing a client no longer just presumed innocent but found not guilty will always be my inspiration. There will be bad days and good days in our practice. What keeps me going are the good days and peers who are always there to teach, help or listen.

13- What do you do outside of the law?

I like to be active. Outside of law you can find me skiing, boxing, golfing, gardening, and travelling.

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

I played ice hockey.