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**DEFENCE BAR**

### **MEMBER PROFILE QUESTIONS**

#### **INTRO :**

**Member Name :** Lee Sela

#### **QUESTIONS :**

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

Like many, criminal law chose me. Unlike many, "life before law" I was a ballet dancer, opera singer, and actor. I stepped into a courtroom for the first time in law school shadowing defence counsel Solomon Friedman in Ottawa. The sensation stepping into a courtroom mirrored the feeling I loved stepping out on to stage. I had found my place. The courtroom was a stage. In criminal law I would still be a storyteller, I was advocating through submissions instead of monologues, the judge and jury my audience, and my client's rights the reason I was passionate and driven to step into court each day. Criminal law found me, and I embraced it.

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

Cases with co-counsel or co-accused are most enjoyable. For the simple reason that defending clients is so often a "solo" job. I enjoy the rare opportunities to work collaboratively with other defence lawyers or otherwise navigate complex strategies or defences. That being said, I find the most interesting cases to work on those where



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search and seizure law are at the forefront or where expert evidence is raised. Cross-disciplinary work such as the science in homicides or the physics in firearm cases I find truly exciting.

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

Thicker skin. Drove me to master the skill of compartmentalization. Increased empathy. Strengthened my belief in humankind - that everyone has their own past, background that may lead them to act or behave in certain ways. Reminds me daily to emphasize to others that nobody is born evil and what motivates a person to commit a crime is not "black and white", rather that each person is unique and their story important to tell. The practice of criminal law taught me that our adversarial system is not perfect but that we can work within it as best we can to help change it.

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

At the 5 year marker you will feel like you have finally litigated or seen most things once in court. It will get easier as experience tempers your expectations. Don't lose faith in the criminal justice system when the vision of what "you thought it would be like" slowly erodes with each decision from a Judge or Jury you disagree with is rendered. Be grateful you practice law in Canada and keep the passion for your client's rights fully ignited as each year passes. There will be no applause, so celebrate the victories. Grieve the losses for a day, and then move on.



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

Tough question. I have had many inspirations along the way, in chronological order these defence lawyers have each impacted and shaped me into the litigator I am today: Anthony Marchetti, Solomon Friedman, Michael Edelson, Anthony G. Bryant, The Honourable Justice Paul Burstein, Cydney Israel, Marco Sciarra.

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

A 2-year-old, dirty blonde hair, few feet high, beautiful little boy: my son Calder. My family keeps me grounded. I am no expert at work-life-balance, but becoming a mom certainly taught me that there is more to life than a career. I deal with the stress by choosing my schedule and choosing to carve out "me" time with yoga, running, cycling, rowing, ballet, playing with my dog Humphrey. Key to reducing stress: calling my close colleagues Etai Hilzenrat or Anthony Marchetti to vent, run things by them in a case, ask for help.

### **7- What do you do outside of the law?**

I like to keep physically active. I still row competitively, race triathlons, and practice yoga regularly. That being said, I love a good brewery on a Sunday with my dog by my side, holding my husband's hand, and watching our little one dance to live music.