

What is the Public Defender's job? *

Public Defenders are on the forefront in the fight against the criminalization of working-class people. The right of poor people to a legal defense was won through mass struggle by community organizers and our office plays a critical role in dismantling the unjust criminal justice system. The right to counsel, like the form unions, social security and the minimum wage, were hard fought victories by organizers who would not take no for an answer.

As a Public Defender, it is my job to oversee an office that provides the best legal defense in the country to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. In addition, my office also connects clients living in precarious conditions with critical services— such as housing, employment and healthcare. The Clean Slate program in our office expunges past criminal records to enable clients to seek housing & employment. Our office also provides paid internships to public school youth & works with the community to ensure every person, regardless of income, is able to live healthy & fulfilling lives in San Francisco.

Why are you running for Public Defender? *

I'm the current elected Public Defender of San Francisco, running for re-election. My value for community stems from the impactful role that community care played in my family's journey. This gave my

family the means to immigrate to America, where I continue a legacy of care and strive to be a vessel to help undo systemic harms.

I acquired a JD from UC Berkeley Law School & began my legal career as a labor lawyer. I soon realized my true calling in fighting for the underdog. I joined the Contra Costa Public Defender's Office, dedicating 7 years to aggressively defending clients charged with misdemeanors & felonies. Impressed with my work, Jeff Adachi hired me to work at the SF Public Defender's Office where I continued working as a line attorney before being promoted to Director of Training & then Manager of the Felony Unit. I now serve as the Elected Public Defender of San Francisco.

Under my leadership, my office will continue to vigorously challenge gang enhancements in court to stop the arbitrary, unfair & excessive criminalization of poor people of color. Due to my success in winning cases where gang allegations have been filed, I have lectured state-wide on debunking stereotypes and embracing community experts to win gang cases. My goal is to continue to deepen the practice and expand the range of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. I'm obsessed with better courtroom practice and results for our largely Black and Brown clients, and plan to continue training so that advocates can better their individual practices. Further, I look forward to scaling up data, and communications, to effectively measure

outcomes such as shorter probation terms and link more clients to our Clean Slate program to reduce the generational impact of convictions.

I'm proud of the pilot programs I have implemented as Public Defender, like the Youth Defender Program that provides paid internships to youth, the Integrity Unit that spotlights police misconduct, & the Freedom Project that challenges excessive sentences & wrongful convictions. I've also expanding our immigration defense practice to include successful class action lawsuits based horrific ICE detention conditions. Besides pushing the envelope on decarceration, if re-elected, my top priority will be to fight tooth & nail to protect our clients from cruel & ineffective tough-on-crime policies that have failed to improve public safety, ruining the lives of millions of vulnerable people. I will also aggressively advocate for a bigger budget, as the need for strong public defense in our city is now more important than ever. I am seeking re-election to implement my vision to continue improving our office, which is widely considered the best in the country.

What makes you the best candidate for San Francisco Public Defender, and what experience qualifies you for the role? *

At this juncture, the Public Defender's Office is a critical generator of criminal justice reform in the city. I believe that, now more than ever, it is important to elect a Public Defender who has the vision, community support & proven track record in fighting back against policies that fuel mass incarceration— someone who can not only hold the line, but also push the envelope on criminal justice reform. I have a broad coalition of elected leaders, community groups & union leaders backing my campaign & have a proven track record of success. I am steadfast in my commitment to aggressively fighting for the best public defense & wraparound services for our clients. This is why I am the best candidate for this job.

How does the Public Defender interact with the District Attorney's office? *

My office is committing to challenging tough-on-crime policies head-on, defeating any agenda to criminalize poor and working people. As Public Defender, I will not allow San Francisco to regress back to the inhumane, cruel and costly war on drugs. We cannot arrest and prosecute our way out of a public health crisis. In addition to providing the best legal defense to our clients, under my leadership, our office will do everything possible to promote restorative justice practices & advance policy to end mass incarceration in San Francisco.

While I try to foster respectful communications with the other "players" in the criminal justice system, they know that my commitment to our clients and their families compels me to always

fight for their best interests irrespective of any professional relationship with adversaries in the system.

What obligation does the Public Defender have to reduce the court backlog? *

My office is urgently working on reducing the backlog in courts as our clients are languishing in jail for months without getting their day in court. This is not just unconscionable, but also unconstitutional. The Covid pandemic coupled with stated intentions of the DA's office about prosecuting drug offenses would only exacerbate the backlogs in court. My office has sued the courts to free individuals in pre-trial detention so they could safely shelter in place at home with their families. As an elected Public Defender, I am committed to working with the City & do everything in my capacity to protect our clients.