

## **\*\*Biography of Ray Buenaventura\*\***

### **\*\*Early Life and Education\*\***

Ray Buenaventura was born in Quezon City, Philippines. He spent the formative years of his childhood surrounded by the rich culture and traditions of his homeland. At the age of 10, Ray's father accepted a job offer in the United States, prompting the family to immigrate to the United States. They relocated and moved to Queens, New York. The bustling environment of New York deeply influenced Ray, exposing him to a myriad of experiences that would shape his worldview.

After five years in New York, the family moved to Daly City, California. It was here that Ray found his academic footing, eventually attending the University of California, Berkeley. He chose to major in legal studies, where he discovered his passion for law and justice.

### **\*\*Legal Career\*\***

Ray's journey into the legal profession was propelled by an internship at the Los Angeles Public Defender's Office. During this transformative experience, he witnessed the challenges faced by indigent clients and the dedication of attorneys who fought for their rights. Inspired by their work, Ray pursued a career as a public defender upon graduating from law school.

He began his initial legal career as a Deputy Public Defender in Los Angeles, requesting an assignment in Compton—known for its tough environment. eager to gain hands-on experience. During his first two years as a public defender, Ray handled serious cases, including homicides and gang-related offenses. His commitment to defending the underrepresented became a hallmark of his career.

After five years in Los Angeles, Ray returned to Daly City, his hometown, where he joined the Private Defender Program (PDP) of San Mateo County, the county's public defender system. This role allowed him to focus on indigent criminal defense, representing clients across a spectrum of cases, from minor offenses to capital murder. Throughout his practice, he emphasized the importance of giving a voice to those often marginalized by the justice system.

### **\*\*A New Chapter: Chief Public Defender\*\***

In September 2023, after years of dedication to the legal profession, Ray was offered the remarkable opportunity to become the Chief Public Defender of Lake County, California.

This role presented both a challenge and a mission: to transform a criticized private contract system into a robust public defender's office that could genuinely serve the community's needs.

Inspired by a renewed sense of purpose, Ray accepted the position with enthusiasm. He understood that the county's previous approach to indigent defense had fallen short, leaving many individuals without the legal support necessary to navigate their circumstances. Recognizing this void, Ray set out to create a system that prioritized effective and compassionate legal representation.

### **\*\*Transforming Public Defense\*\***

Ray's vision for the public defender's office was rooted in a holistic approach to indigent defense. He believed that effective representation extended beyond the criminal charges at hand, recognizing the complex factors contributing to recidivism. Mental health issues, substance abuse, job instability, and familial challenges were all areas he aimed to address, developing programs that would support clients in their entirety, not just within legal confines.

Central to Ray's strategy was the implementation of an early representation model, ensuring that every defendant in custody would be seen by a lawyer promptly. This principle reinforced the office's commitment to advocacy, providing immediate support to those in need. He dedicated himself to securing in-custody releases for clients who could not afford bail, working tirelessly against the systemic biases that often plagued the justice system.

### **\*\*Building a Legacy of Hope\*\***

Under Ray's leadership, the public defender's office came to life swiftly and efficiently, exceeding expectations from the outset. The office began accepting felony and misdemeanor appointments ahead of schedule, all while maintaining a focus on thorough and compassionate legal representation. Ray was committed to demonstrating that public defenders were not just legal representatives but passionate advocates for justice.

Ray's commitment to building a talented and diverse team ensured that his vision for holistic representation became a reality. By fostering a collaborative and supportive environment, he cultivated an office that stood ready to deliver impactful legal assistance to all who sought justice.

## **CA State Bar**

Ray's distinguished journey with the California State Bar commenced in 2011 when he was appointed to the Criminal Law Advisory Commission. In this role, he took on the responsibility of certifying and recertifying lawyers aspiring to become certified criminal law specialists. His dedication to excellence involved thorough investigations and evaluations to ensure that applicants met the stringent requirements of moral character and professional experience necessary for certification.

Beyond certifications, Ray played a key role in shaping the future of legal standards by creating and preparing examination questions and grading the performance of candidates of the specialist exam. His contributions were instrumental in maintaining the integrity and rigor of criminal law certification.

Recognizing the need for systemic reform, Ray sought further engagement by joining the Ad Hoc Commission on Attorney Discipline. His passion for promoting fairness and equity led him to advocate for African American male attorneys, addressing the disparities in disciplinary actions they faced. As a vocal proponent of institutional reforms, Ray championed initiatives to combat systemic racism and pushed for measures such as expungement and diversionary programs.

In 2019, Ray's commitment to justice and equity was recognized when he was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the State Bar. He continued to build on his extensive experience through active participation in several committees, including the Audit, Finance, and Access to Fairness and Justice Committees. His influence extended to significant discussions aimed at reforming the State Bar, focusing on crucial issues regarding attorney discipline and public safety.

Ray's relentless advocacy also addressed the shortcomings in the Bar's implementation of examination procedures. He played a vital role in seeking remedies for those affected, including the establishment of a provisional license program, which received the endorsement of the California Supreme Court. His unwavering dedication to justice and equitable treatment has made him a formidable presence in the legal community and the public at large.

## **Awards**

Ray was awarded the prestigious Joe Morozumi Award for Exceptional Legal Advocacy by the Asian American Bar Association of Northern California for his commitment to social justice and fighting for his clients. Ray also received the Outstanding Volunteer Attorney

Award–Justice & Diversity Center from the San Francisco Bar Association and the Jose Rizal Award for Public Service from the Filipino Bar Association of Northern California.

### **Public Service**

Alongside his legal practice, Ray became involved in his community. He volunteered with various non-profits and served as a Library Commissioner for the City of Daly City. His commitment to public service led him to the Daly City Council, where he was appointed in 2011. Over the years, Ray ascended to become Mayor of Daly City, holding the position for four terms. In this role, he focused on community development and strengthening local services.

Ray has served on non-profit boards including the Pilipino Bayanihan Resource Center, KOC Foundation for Developmentally Disabled Children and Adults, Skyline President's Council, and the Pinoy/Pinay Educational Partnerships. Ray has extensive pro bono experience with non-profit agencies, including the Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter, Maple Street Shelter, Ujima Family Recovery Services, First Chance for Families, and the Eviction Defense Collaborative of San Francisco.

In his spare time, Ray enjoys flying airplanes as pilot in land and sea operations. He is instrument rated with complex ratings and tailwheel endorsements. He is a Captain with Civil Air Patrol; an Auxiliary of the United States Air Force committed to search and rescue operations. Ray is also a Command Pilot with Angel Flight West, an organization that provides free air transportation to patients seeking medical treatment.