

Why I am Endorsing Rebecca Young for Public Defender Instead of the Incumbent

by Geoffrey Brown

I was the elected Public Defender of San Francisco for 22 years. I am endorsing Rebecca Young for Public Defender because she has shown that she will make a great Public Defender. Rebecca has brought the first challenge to the Public Defender race in 20 years. That alone shows her courage. That she is doing it without endorsement from San Francisco's Democratic Party establishment shows her independence.

Does it matter who the Public Defender is?

The Office of Public Defender must represent persons accused of crime who are unable to afford their own lawyers as well as minors in juvenile court who are charged with crimes or alleged to be mentally ill who the county seeks to conserve. Annually, the Office represents over 20,000 clients. To accomplish this constitutionally mandated job, the office has a staff of 205 attorneys, investigators, paralegals, clerks and social workers.

It is imperative that Public Defender attorneys and investigators provide competent, compassionate and vigorous representation to each client. To fail to do so is to fail the Constitutional requirement of competent representation in all criminal cases.

So, why should Rebecca Young be our next Public Defender as opposed to the incumbent who has been there for 3.5 years? Compelling reasons exist: her decades of trial and management experience, her solid program for needed change, her committed spirit that will encourage excellence from staff and her pledge to promote diversity and a humane working environment.

Experience. Rebecca Young has been a criminal trial lawyer for over 35 years. She has practiced privately and for 19 years as a public defender. She has earned a stellar reputation trying the toughest cases. She was a top administrator in the Public Defender's office - supervising trial attorneys who handle serious and violent felonies. There too she excelled. She can try cases and win, *and* she can manage attorneys - a rare combination for a lawyer!

Program for Change. Rebecca Young is running because there are critical unmet needs in the current management. For one, top-heavy, high-paid administrators are sapping resources from the needs of line deputies. There are five chief attorneys. Jeff Adachi and I had one. Second, she recognizes that the attorneys are burdened with caseloads that threaten solid representation. She will establish nationally recognized caseload standards to protect the rights of the accused. She will also establish experience standards for promotions, elevations and assignments. You can't supervise or train if you have not done the work. Finally, she will assign attorneys and others according to their strengths.

Committed Spirit. Any office performs well only if the people in it feel a sense of inspiration. That inevitably depends on the leadership. Having watched Rebecca over the years, I am convinced her

passion and enthusiasm for high quality representation will rally the staff to give the best work possible.

Humane Working Environment. Rebecca Young is committed to diversity in hiring and promotional practices. As a Chinese-American woman, who experienced daily anti-Asian violence growing up, she is committed to an office that reflects the clientele and the community. She is committed to creating an office where all workers feel acknowledged, fairly treated and can thrive.

Jeff Adachi built a great public defender's office. His death left a gaping hole that must be filled. Rebecca Young will fulfill that challenge.