

**From:** [Matthew Ahn](#)  
**To:** [CPC Applications](#)  
**Subject:** Cleveland Community Police Commission Application  
**Date:** Thursday, May 5, 2022 12:00:50 PM

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Submitted on Thu, 05/05/2022 - 12:00

Submitted by: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

**First Name**

Matthew

**Last Name**

Ahn

**Are you a resident of Cleveland?**

Yes

**Home Address**

**City**

Cleveland

**State**

Ohio

**Zip Code**

44113

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**Are you over 18 years of age?**

Yes

**What is your gender identity?**

Male

**What do you consider your race?**

Asian

**What do you consider your ethnicity?**

Korean

**Most recent place of work, job title, and address**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Law  
CSU College of Law  
1801 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115

**Selection Criteria**

I am a first-generation American who is both an LGBTQ+ person and a racial minority. My career as a public defender and specifically as a sentencing/post-conviction specialist has required me to deeply understand, the cycles of trauma that my clients have endured over the course of their lives, and the ways in which they have interacted with police not only in the instant case but over their entire lives. These clients include non-native English speakers and those who have been unhoused for large portions of their life, and almost all of them deal with mental illness and substance-abuse disorders.

I am also personally a victim of police violence, as I was shot by Toledo police on May 30, 2020.

My academic research focuses, among other things, on civil rights suits under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, which is the typical vehicle for civil suits against the police for misconduct/violence.

**Have you been employed as a law enforcement officer during the past five (5) years?**

No

**Have you ever been employed by the Cleveland Division of Police in any capacity?**

No

**Have you ever been employed by the Cleveland Department of Public Safety?**

No

**Do you understand the role of the Commission and the responsibilities of its members?**

Yes

**Do you acknowledge the potentially significant time commitment expected of each member?**

Yes

**Do you understand that applications for the Commission are public records, subject to disclosure upon request?**

Yes

**Do you understand that your social security number may be required to conduct a background check if you are selected as a finalist?**

Yes

**Do you speak any other languages?**

No

**Please state your reasons for desiring to serve on the Commission.**

Police oversight does not automatically result in police accountability. Despite the passage of reforms across the country, the rate of police killings has remained steady at approximately 1100 per year for over a decade, even at the height of the 2020 pandemic lockdowns. Statistics on non-fatal violence are troublingly nonexistent, but the closest proxies available indicate that such violence, if anything, has increased.

I believe that my expertise and experience will help the Commission make informed decisions based on the data and information available about the systems we are trying to improve.

**Please describe any skills, life experiences, and expertise that would qualify you for an appointment.**

My entire law practice experience has been geared toward picking up the pieces after police actions. I understand the human cost of these actions as they are geared toward folks at both ends of the spectrum: (1) my public defense clients, indigent individuals charged with crimes, who are often the least sympathetic in the eyes of society and the ones that police believe they hold the most power over, and (2) my clients from my years in special education practice, children who are often subjected to police action simply because they are "acting weird", which police are liable to treat on its own as a crime. Several of my client's children, all juveniles (pre-teen and teenagers), were nearly arrested during my representation of them due to manifestations of their cognitive or mental health conditions.

My academic expertise, which includes 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the statute that allows police departments to be sued for constitutional deprivations, arises out of my experience working with my public defense clients but also my two federal clerkships, including one in the Northern District of New York, which has one of the highest proportions of § 1983 cases in their docket across the country. I also teach a class that covers police history and considers how the police have responded to reform requests over the last 150 years.

**Please describe how you see the oversight role of the new Community Police Commission impacting policing in Cleveland.**

There are four theories of criminal punishment: rehabilitation, deterrence (sometimes broken into general and specific), incapacitation, and retribution. Unlike the current criminal system (which focuses on incapacitation) and the criminal system we should be building (which focuses on rehabilitation), I see the purpose of the Community Police Commission being more focused (not entirely, but more) on deterrence.

While these four theories have substantial interaction with each other, I don't think that Issue 24's proponents would consider the Commission a success unless police misconduct and violence actually decreases. Therefore, the Community Police Commission needs to understand what possible rulings and consequences will lead to both specific and general deterrence in the future.

**Please provide other information you consider pertinent: (i.e., civic and community group, memberships, related work experiences and professional groups).**

I believe I have explained in other questions what believe I would bring to the Commission. Below is a representative sample of my civic and community group memberships:

Ohio National Lawyers Guild

Northeast Ohio American Constitution Society

Bar admission to the Northern District of Ohio and the Sixth Circuit

Cuyahoga County Democratic Party, Precinct Committee Member-Designate (Cleveland Precinct 3-1)

Board of Directors, Toledo Opera