

COME CORRECT



INTERVIEW:
Hudson County Corrections
PBA President Ocasio

It's not easy being Hudson County P.B.A. President. At 34 and a proud graduate of Bergen County Police Academy, meet the man, who gets the job done, Corrections Officer, Luis A. Ocasio

Q. How many years have you been on the job?

A. *I have been with the Hudson County Correction Department for about 11 years.*

Q. What inspired you to be a Corrections Officer?

A. *Good question, but I didn't start off wanting to be a corrections officer. I don't think anyone does. Who in their right mind wants to spend 8 hours of their day for 25 years surrounded by people who can't live in society. At a very young age, I wanted to be what they call a beat cop; the kind of officer that walks around shaking hands with the kids and helping people.*

Q. Everyone needs a little inspiration in their lives so how did this career become your defining moment.

A. *I was attending a local college when I took the civil service exam. The first offer I received was for County Corrections Officer. I agreed to the position hoping it would be a good stepping stone for me. After a while, I realized there was much more to corrections and decided I wanted to make it my career.*

Q. How long have you been the President for the Hudson County Corrections P.B.A.?

A. *It's been 1 year but before that I was the alternate state delegate for 2 years.*

Q. How do you feel about serving in the highest position for the P.B.A. you are associated with?

A. *First and foremost, I am honored and thankful to the membership for having enough faith and respect in me to elect me President. I want them to know that I will do my best for everyone collectively. As President, it is definitely not an easy task and by far the most challenging I have ever held. With a department with over 400 members, you can imagine how busy we are.*

Q. I'm quite sure you have your hands full with all those members. Do you ever just get a break from it all?

A. *Time off no longer feel like "time off". Everyone that holds a position on this executive board is always dealing with issues, if not in person, then on the phone (bbm or texting) or by e-mail.*

Q. I can imagine being President of this organization has its challenges but what issues require the most attention?

A. *Well what can I say, administration. Dealing with administration is never easy and the relationship will always be adversarial especially, when politics have such a big influence on decision making in the department. Most issues would be a lot easier to resolve if there were no "middle men". It would be a lot easier if I could sit with one supervisor and come to an agreement. What's the point of being a supervisor if you can't make supervisors decisions without checking with every Director, Confidential aide or county attorney.*

Q. Do you care to clarify? The conflict-resolution can't be all that difficult.

A. *It just seems that any issues that arise can't be settled between management and union officials. Everything has to be cleared by some county attorney who has absolutely no idea of what its like to be in law enforcement let alone in the unique world of corrections. For example, I have sat with unit managers to deal with numerous complaints. At the end of the meeting, all parties involve come to agreement on which disciplinary actions to take (if any), but somehow when the officer and the union get called back into the office, the decision that we all deemed acceptable is retracted because someone thinks it was too soft but never too harsh.*

Q. Your work definitely keeps you busy, but do you ever just have time to do some of the things you enjoy. I can't believe that you would be all work and no play.

A. *Your right. I am quite busy but when I do get some down time I love to spend it with my family. You would most likely find me working on my house or going for long drives if I'm not in the garage wrenching.*

Q. Did you say wrenching?

A. *Yes. I must confess I'm a big car guy. I love them all especially the late 60's to early 70's models. That time period had some really great cars muscle cars, Roadrunners, Challengers I also like late model rotary powered car just to name a few.*

Q. Nowadays privatization seems to be the hot topic circulating around many police precincts. How do you feel about this? Do you think this could be the future for the state of New Jersey, possibly having our jails or prisons taken over one day?

A. *It's a scary thought. These private security companies don't care about public safety, gang activity, violence, or contraband being smuggled into the facility. All these companies will care about is making money and making sure politicians that support the idea get their cut. This will eventually cost tax payers a whole lot more and they are not aware of it. This is just another way for them to steal money from the tax payers. What they are attempting to do is diminish the role of law enforcement. First its corrections but what's next: the municipal police? Once they gain control of both, there will be no stopping them. We might as well fork over our checks.*

Q. Wow! No one wants to keep giving out money especially with the way the economy is and all. There are a lot of "penny pinchers" these days. What would you recommend as the solution so that correction officers can save their jobs?

A. *The only thing we can do; show the public how we are important to the communities and to public safety. Corrections do so much for the community like hosting Jr. Police tours and our D.A.R.E and Scared Straight programs offered to our schools. We are the ones trained to detect and prevent killings, assaults, drugs, and rapes from happening in these facilities. Privately ran facilities won't care about preventing these crimes because it won't cost them anything. We the tax payers will be paying for it. Hopefully the community will recognize the dangers of having a private company running the jails and how this will affect everyone.*

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Q. Let me backtrack for a moment if you don't mind but what would you say has been your greatest achievement since becoming President of the P.B.A?

A. *Honestly, as far as the P.B.A is concerned, we have a lot of catching up and work to do. When I became president of the union, there were a couple dozen officers facing major disciplinary charges. With the help of EdPd-Law, we (the Executive board) have had all but four of these charges dismissed. Currently, we are continuing our efforts to have the remaining charges dismissed.*

Q. EdPd-Law? Can you explain a little more on what this service is about?

A. *EdPd-Law is a company ran by cops that assist law enforcement with union issues. The membership elected to hire EdPd-Law last September to assist the local districts. We have been working together putting all our paperwork into a database. All officers will be able to do research and get assistance when filing a grievance or if they just want to do some research to become better educated. The membership will have total access to countless documents and unlimited information. Officers will be able to pull out their smart phones or laptops and see their up-to-date personal information and do research any time and any place. Acquiring the professional assistance of this company is one of the best decisions this local has made to date.*

Q. The world is becoming so technologically advance that you can find just about anything. Speaking of which, I've happened to look at the EdPd-Law website recently and read a story about Internal Affairs Sgt. Ricardo Aviles. What can you tell me about that?

A. *At this current time I can't tell you much because it is an on-going investigation but I will tell you this... you obviously went on-line and read the story and I bet you and anyone else who read it, thought the same thing "what a waste of tax dollars!"*

Q. Funny, now that you mention tax dollars, what do you think is the problem with the economy and what will it take to correct it?

A. *I'll give you a few examples of why the economy is the way it is today. First, we have the mayor of Union City's wife riding around in a city vehicle paid for by the Union City tax payers. This vehicle came along with insurance, maintenance, and all the fuel she would ever need. Again, all paid for with tax dollars. You can find out this information by NJ.com. Then you have the Essex County executive, Joe DiVincenzo, who had the nerve to admit that he wasn't the only one double dipping. Now add that to every other double dipper, all the vacant jobs being replaced by some washed up politician or family member making 2 to 3 times the salary with an assistant who does his or her job, with double titles and double salaries and you get your explanation of why the economy is in a recession. These "blood suckers" are playing the system all across the country and there is no one there to police them.*

Q. I can sense you feel strongly about this issue so what would you suggest.

A. *I'm not saying that they are all stealing, but from where I am sitting it sure seems like it. We need to start demanding that these crooks and all their cronies be prosecuted and banned from politics.*



Q. As you know the anniversary of 9/11 is approaching once again. This tragedy is one of the worst attachments to our country. Can you recall where you were when the first plane hit the towers?

A. *I had just gotten off my shift a few hours earlier and was still in bed. At about 8:30a.m, I received a phone call. The person on the other line told me what had just happened. I turned on the television and saw the horrific images after the first plane had already struck the first tower. At the time I lived on Blvd. East in Weehawken, so I put my shoes on and went outside. From where I lived I could see the NYC sky line. My heart was pounding when I saw the smoke rising from the towers. There was a large crowd on the street. Everyone was crying and screaming.*

Q. What went through your mind when the first plane hit the towers?

A. *After seeing the first plane hit on T.V., I kept asking myself how something could like this happen but more importantly, here of all places. Why would someone do something so evil? I had a bad feeling it was a terrorist attack. A short time later, the second plane hit and at that point I had no doubt in my mind it was a terrorist attack.*

Q. Americans still feel the aftershock every year. The devastation and loss for many families was detrimental. That's not an easy thing to neither forgive nor forget. I mean, what was going through your mind during those horrific hours?

A. *I was in shock. I couldn't believe what had just happened. I was hoping that whoever was responsible would be caught.*

Q. Our great country has never been the same after the attacks. Many first responders died in order to save others in the line of duty. Today many of the first responders who volunteered countless hours digging through the rubble; in order to save others are now dying of cancer. Sad to say, these same responders have to fight legally in order to get their treatments and coverage. How do you feel towards the lack of compensation these first responders are receiving today?

A. *I think it's horrible. These men and women ran towards the danger as everyone else was running away from it. They risked their lives for others. If it wasn't for these heroes, we would have lost many more lives. Decisions like these are the reasons why so many people are disappointed in our leaders today. It's a shame that they have to fight for treatment. It's the least we can do for them. They deserve it.*

Q. You have given so much of your time. Any final remarks would you like to add?

A. *I'm reminded by a quote by Theodore Roosevelt, "It's not the critic that counts." It says: "It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat. Finally " I'd like to thank the two men I look up to. First is God for everything he has given me, secondly, my father, a Marine, who made me the man that I am.*

Thank you Hudson County PBA President Ocasio!