

Michael Noriega

FROM PUBLIC DEFENDER TO SUPREME COURT JUSTICE



BACKGROUND

Born in Weehawken and raised in Union City, Justice Noriega is an alumnus of St. Peter's Prep, Rutgers University, where he earned a degree in American Studies, and Seton Hall University School of Law. Drawn to public service and advocating for underrepresented communities, Justice Noriega credits much of his drive to his father's advice: "You have to be a professional and reach the highest level in any chosen field." That guiding principle, instilled by his parents—both physicians in Peru—inspired his lifelong pursuit of excellence and service.

CAREER

Justice Noriega began his legal career as a public defender in Essex County before practicing civil and criminal trial law, with a focus on the intersection of criminal and immigration law. A dedicated public servant and mentor, he founded the Sanar Institute to support survivors of interpersonal violence, taught as an adjunct professor at Seton Hall School of Law, and has guided aspiring legal professionals from high school through law school. Nominated by Governor Phil Murphy, he was sworn in as an Associate Justice on July 6, 2023, and considers presiding over naturalization ceremonies for new American citizens among his greatest honors.

IMPACT

Justice Noriega is the third Hispanic to serve on the Supreme Court of New Jersey and the first Peruvian American and first former public defender to sit on the state's highest court. A passionate advocate for mentorship, he works with students from kindergarten through law school across New Jersey and beyond.

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