

**Deep South Defenders**  
A Dramatic TV Series  
By Ravi Gupta

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## Overview

An Indian-American lawyer from New York returns to Mississippi, where he previously taught high school for Teach for America, to defend a former student falsely accused of murder. He teams up with his old rival from law school to mount a vigorous defense of his student in the face of powerful enemies and a rigged justice system. The case inspires our duo to found a public interest law firm to defend the innocent across the Deep South.

## Story

Meet Sai Arora. As our story begins, he's fresh off successfully defending a major hedge fund CEO accused of insider trading. The case is a windfall for his firm, which should put Sai on the fast track to partner. But an adversary at the firm feels threatened by Sai and assigns him to a low-priority case: the defense of Lake Allen, an octogenarian Mississippi construction magnate accused of bid-rigging state contracts. This case requires Sai to travel down to Jackson, Mississippi until the case is resolved.

Sai would be a natural fit for the case if he wasn't so self-important. He has some experience in Mississippi — having served for two years in Teach for America in Jackson. And in the world of a Yankee law firm, that makes Sai an expert in all things Mississippi.

But Sai's Teach for America experience isn't his only connection to the Lake Allen case. Unbeknownst to his firm, Sai's law school adversary Curtis Green is the lead prosecutor. The two sized each other up on the first day of Yale Law School and have been competing ever since. Over their three years at law school they went head-to-head for the top class rank, with Sai ultimately ranking first and Curtis second, but with the latter winning the prestigious and arguably more important Moot Court competition. In a way, they fought to a draw, and seem to be aching for a rematch.

When Sai first arrives in Jackson, he's treated to a hero's welcome. It wasn't too long ago that he produced the highest AP English results any public Mississippi high school had ever seen — all while turning around the school's football program.

Sai also has a powerful ally in Lake Allen, who clearly knows every important person in the state. Everyone seems to owe Lake a favor. Wherever Sai goes, people are eager to make his life as easy as possible. But Sai can't shake the question: how did the most powerful man in the state, someone with a never-ending stream of admirers and friends, get indicted in the first place?

Curtis is of course irked to see his hometown welcome Sai. You could say this town isn't big enough for the two of them. And Curtis wastes no time in putting Sai in his place. The two clash over a motion to dismiss the Lake Allen case, with Curtis coming out on top. Curtis uses the experience to school his old rival on the ways of a Deep South court room, where fast-talking legalese matters much less than a good story.

The failure of Sai's motion portends a longer-than-expected stay in Mississippi, which is the last thing he needs if he's to make partner. But he quickly stumbles across two ghosts from his past that make him reconsider his eagerness to leave so soon.

First, he runs into an old crush from his TFA days, Latisha Barrett, who is now the principal of a local charter school. Sai may present an unemotional and detached front, but he's never stopped thinking about her. The two grew apart over the years, largely because Sai was horrible at staying in touch after leaving Mississippi. Over the course of our Season One, he will try and fail numerous times to patch things up with her, all while Curtis makes inroads and eventually starts dating her.

Sai's second ghost from his past comes right after his motion hearing against Curtis in the Lake Allen case. The two lawyers decide to make a truce over drinks at a local blues club. There, they encounter Amaya Harris, a former student of Sai's who tends bar at the club to pay for her tuition at Jackson State. Through that conversation, they learn that Amaya's brother Darius, a beloved former student of Sai's, was recently charged with the murder of a police officer.

The next day, Sai and Curtis pay a visit to Amaya and Darius's mother, who fills them in on the details of the case. According to Mrs. Harris, Darius went to Ridgeland, which is an affluent and white suburb of Jackson, to celebrate Darius's friend's birthday. Darius was riding his new motorcycle and returned home without a scratch. He was awakened the next day and taken into police custody on suspicion of being involved in a botched police chase of a motorcyclist. Apparently, a man on a similar make and model motorcycle to Darius's made it over the county line back to Jackson after cops gave chase on suspicion of reckless driving, and in the process, an officer wrapped himself around a telephone pole, dying instantly.

As background, Ridgeland police and residents constantly complain of crime from the neighboring Hinds County (Jackson) and car chases to the border are common, since Jackson residents can count on a friendly, more inept police department. But Ridgeland has recently installed cameras on busier roads and highways into Jackson, and on the night in question, they snapped a picture of Darius's motorcycle making its way across the border at a time and location that fit perfectly with the crime. Two of Darius's friends from dinner were riding alongside him for most of the ride home, and can confirm he took a different route and never sped away from cops – but Ridgeland officials have thus far ignored that evidence.

To add additional intrigue to the case, the cop who died was the son of Rachel Hood, a powerful aide to the Governor, who will undoubtedly use

every lever of power at her disposal to crush Darius. Rachel is also the goddaughter to Lake Allen, Sai's client.

Sai must balance his work on the Lake Allen case with his growing interest in Darius's case -- while Curtis does the same balancing act with his duties as a prosecutor.

At first, Curtis and Sai find a comically inept local lawyer to serve as the face of the case, while the two handle most of the important legal strategy behind the scenes. The two also pay a local investigator, a colorfully shady woman from the Mississippi Delta named Kira Ilgenfritz, to track down important evidence in the case. They also bring on Darius's sister Amaya to handle most of the legal research. In the beginning, they operate in secret out of a deserted theater in the abandoned Farish Street section of Jackson. The theater is owned by Latisha's father, a powerful local pastor named Bishop Ronnie Barrett, who bought it in foreclosure and is obsessed with redeveloping that once-lively part of town. The Bishop is a powerful friend to the boys, but they are never quite sure of his motives or where they stand with him.

Without realizing it, they've stood up a public interest law firm -- which they eventually dub "Farish Street Defenders." They make pains to hide their work from a growing cadre of powerful enemies, most importantly the GOP political machine, which has its tentacles in all aspects of life in the state.<sup>1</sup>

While the Harris case progresses, so does the Lake Allen case. And though Sai and Curtis are allies in the former, they are still adversaries in the latter. This, combined with their mutual courtship of Latisha Barrett, puts a strain

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<sup>1</sup> This machine is the progeny of what was called the "Eastland Machine," named after Democratic Senator Jim Eastland, who ruled the state for decades with an iron fist and generally protected white power. For more: <https://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2018/jul/09/opinion-end-eastland-machine/>

on their budding collaboration and friendship. The case also takes an additional toll on Sai who slowly discovers that Lake Allen, his new mentor, sits atop a corrupt and racist system that is responsible for Darius's arrest and prosecution – and many more injustices like it.

The Lake Allen case also gives us a window into a behind-the-scenes battle between the black power structure, led by Bishop Barrett, and the white power structure, led by Allen. Barrett is making a run at Allen's network of patronage jobs, no bid contracts, and bought-and-paid-for-politicians. He's tired of table scraps, and the indictment of Allen was the opening shot of what will be a long battle between the two camps.

Curtis' boss, the Jackson District Attorney, eventually forces him to drop the Lake Allen case, prompting both Curtis and Sai to suspect foul play. That suspicion is confirmed when Sai confronts Lake in the season's final episode. No longer the benevolent mentor, Lake threatens Sai in a way that hints at the extent of his power – revealing a darker side that will play out over the course of future seasons.

The season ends with a guilty verdict in Darius's case, which prompts Sai to finally quit his job at his firm to handle Darius's appeal and to scale up Farish Street Defenders into a legitimate public interest law firm. Curtis, disgusted with his office's handling of the Lake Allen case (and generally sick of sitting on the prosecutor's side of the table), also quits his job and joins Sai full time at Farish Street Defenders.

Throughout the course of Season One, the juxtaposition of the Lake Allen and Darius Harris cases give us a window into a two-tiered system of justice in the South. And with each twist and turn of those cases, we come to meet an increasingly colorful cast of villains, heroes, and bystanders.

Our heroes may have lost their case, but in the process they've peeled back layers of an architecture of corruption that many have a vested

interest in keeping secret. For their new venture to survive – hell, for them to survive – they will have to outsmart and outmaneuver capable and motivated enemies for years to come.

## **Themes**

This show is about justice –or the lack thereof. We learn how elected judges, one-party rule, private prisons, draconian laws, and centuries of racism combine to make it impossible for a black person to receive a fair trial in the South. We also examine the two-tiered education system that exists alongside the two tiers of justice. At every turn the very people and laws that are supposed to protect the innocent serve as mirages in the legal desert that is the Deep South. Over time we will grow to be skeptical of nearly everyone who works within this system. Our villains for the most part aren't cartoonishly evil; rather they are intensely self-interested, and desperate to accumulate and preserve power in a place where power is everything. But the exceptions – the courageous idealists – will inspire us to cling to whatever hope remains.

This show is also about the conflict between individuality and community. When we first meet Sai, he's living the vacuous life of a New York City bachelor, with deceased parents and a revolving door of friends and lovers. Ever since he lost his mother and father, he's been living life out of a fear of rejection, focusing inward to the only person he can count on. But through his journey back to Mississippi, he is reminded of the best version of himself. And in the new reflection he sees in the mirror, he comes to consider a different way of life. A slower, deeper, more purposeful way of life. A life of service to the most vulnerable.

This isn't *Suits*, *the Practice*, or *Franklin & Bash*. There aren't many happy endings and not guilty verdicts. The few we get are usually the product of painful struggles that come with unspeakable costs. And our lawyers reflect not just a different level of racial and geographic diversity – but also a generational struggle against our country's cynical drift.

But somehow, through it all, our heroes manage to have fun in the process. Despite all of the heartache and tragedy, they embrace their swashbuckling journey with the style and energy of real-life Avengers.

## **SETTING**

The majority of the story takes place in and around present-day Jackson, Mississippi – the state capitol. It's the most populous city in the state, but that's not saying much. Jackson still functions like a small town, for better or worse. At just north of 160,000 residents, it would only be California's 32<sup>nd</sup>-largest city. It doesn't even have a functioning movie theater.

What Jackson does have is a rich history and a proud, distinct culture. Jackson is the city of Eudora Welty and Richard Wright. It's where over three hundred Freedom Riders made their most notable stand. It's where Medgar Evers was gunned down.

That was then. The current Jackson is the product of a half-century of failed leadership, poor policy, and racism. The result is a city falling apart.

The downtown feels more like a ghost town than a center of commerce. Beautiful turn-of-the-century art deco buildings fall into disrepair. Historic signs mark places of once-national prominence. And the sleepy state capitol on its busiest days can still feel like a museum closed for Sunday. It's safe to say that on a given day, more people go in and out of your average suburban Whole Foods than the entirety of downtown Jackson.

Jackson also has a comically poor level of infrastructure and inept city services, as well as perpetually unsafe drinking water, a fire department with historically anemic response times, and a nationally ranked homicide rate. And to say Jackson has potholes would be like saying Brazil has trees. It just doesn't begin to describe the scope. The city has essentially given



up on filling the holes and instead places cones around them with yellow caution tape.

But there's still something beautiful about the city. Front porches, magnolia trees, barbecue joints, speakeasies, meat and threes, and church pews filled on Sundays. To borrow the well-worn cliché, being there is like going back in time. Business and political leaders start their days with gabfests in charming luncheonettes dotted around the city and finish them in smoke-filled jazz clubs.

Jackson is our window into the state of Mississippi, but we don't stop at the city limits. We also spend a good deal of time in the white, affluent town next door, Ridgeland. Ridgeland is everything that Jackson isn't. Where Jackson is majority black, Ridgeland is majority white. Ridgeland has the highest performing public schools in the state, sprawling suburban office parks, and gleaming new commercial centers. You can spend an entire weekend searching for a pothole and would likely come up empty-handed.

Ridgeland is a response to mandated bussing in the decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*. Rather than send their kids to segregated schools, many white residents of Jackson fled over the border and turned what was at the time not much more than a cow pasture into a suburban oasis. And they've used every dirty tool in the book – restrictive covenants, zoning laws, private harassment – to ensure black Jacksonians couldn't come with them.

In Season One, we focus on the tension between these two cities – and in future seasons we will explore similar dynamics through Mississippi and the wider South as the Farish Street Defenders take on more cases. We will find that in nearly every corner of the South, there's a black part of town and a white part of town, a black county and a white county, or a black city and white city. But make no mistake, this isn't separate but equal. One

side of the equation has been largely keeping this division in place at the expense of the other.

## **CHARACTERS**

**Sai Arora**, 35, is one of the most gifted young lawyers in the country. A central part of his talent is his chameleon-like ability to adapt to his audience – whether it be a judge, a jury, or a witness.

That versatility stems from a life lived largely as an outsider. He was born to Indian immigrant parents who died in a car crash shortly after his birth. He was adopted by an Italian-American woman and raised in a working class neighborhood of Brooklyn, where he learned to hide his Indian ethnicity. He spent most of his childhood getting into trouble – he was arrested six times before the age of 18.

Despite Sai's early troubles, it was always clear he had promise. He was blessed with a powerful combination of industriousness and enthusiasm. After college, he served two years in Teach for America in Jackson, Mississippi where he became a local legend when he managed to quadruple the number of students who passed the AP English exam at a local high school while also managing to turn around the school's football program.

To the great disappointment of the residents of Jackson, Sai left his stint at Teach for America after two years (as many unfortunately do) and went to Yale Law School, where he graduated at the top of his class. But his adopted mother never got to see that moment: she died of cancer weeks before his graduation.

From his mother's death forward, Sai has been a loner on a mission. After a successful stint as a federal prosecutor (breaking his office's single-year record for the number of cases tried and won), he joined his current law firm as their star recruit.

What drives Sai? In the beginning, it seems like his ego is his only compass – a textbook "productive narcissist." Confident and self-absorbed. But his apparent vanity masks a deep insecurity that drives his work ethic. At the start of our story, he's the stereotype of the Manhattan bachelor, having gone through four girlfriends in the past five years alone. His relationships always end for the same reasons: he loves his work more than he's loved anything or anyone else.

Of course there's a deeper motivation to his behavior that not even he realizes. He claims he's resisted marriage and kids because he views settling down as a surrender to adulthood. But deep down, after losing three parents, he's afraid to lose anyone else he loves.

Throughout the show, Sai learns that what he really craves – needs, even – is not individual success, but a community. And that community may just a place that he couldn't wait to escape just a few years before: Jackson.

**Curtis Green**, 35, grew up in Jackson as the son of a day laborer and a housekeeper. He's about six feet tall and stocky with closely cropped hair and a thin mustache, like Michael B. Jordan. Given his combination of an elite education and a homespun, blue collar upbringing, he is a force in the courtroom. He's the kind of person who will dominate *any* room, making him both a persuasive advocate and catch with women. At the beginning of our story, he's a rising star at the Jackson District Attorney's Office. Conventional wisdom in town is that the DA's seat is his for the taking whenever he wants it. He's basically lived his life making friends and avoiding controversy – setting himself up perfectly for a life of politics. But when his old law school foe Sai comes to town, Curtis starts to make some powerful enemies quickly, and he must choose whether to protect his career or fight for justice.

**Darius Harris**, 27, had the world ahead of him until the night of his 27th birthday. He's tall, handsome, and brilliant. In high school he was both

valedictorian and captain of the football team. Both in the classroom and on the football field, Sai was his mentor. But Darius never forgave Sai for leaving and returning to New York after his junior year and for not coming back to see him graduate. Darius went on to attend the local, highly regarded Millsaps College on a full scholarship and was in his fourth and final year of medical school at the University of Mississippi when he was arrested. Our experience with Darius is confined to the courtroom and through prison scenes that expose the horrors of Mississippi's private prison system. There's a well-worn trope that prison changes everyone. How could it not? But Darius is determined not to let the system change *him* – however hard it tries. His stoic strength and determination serve as an inspiration to the team at Farish Street Defenders.

**Amaya Harris**, 21, is Darius' sister. There's no-one she looks up to more than her brother, so when he's arrested, she springs to action. Her efforts are largely futile until she runs into Sai, who taught her briefly in middle school before he was transferred to a high school gig. She's a junior at Jackson State University, studying political science — and her dream is to become a lawyer. She nominally serves as the research assistant on Darius' case but functionally serves as the chief of staff for the new firm, keeping their ragtag group focused and organized. When we first meet her, she's shy and bookish, but over time she blossoms into a confident and assertive member of the team.

**Lake Allen**, 83, is the richest man in Mississippi. He's the chairman and founder of a mega-successful real estate company and has largely lived a charmed life until he was unexpectedly charged with bid rigging of state contracts. He's generally played his politics right and seems immune to consequences. But the Jackson District Attorney office, which is run by seemingly incorruptible and mostly black leaders from outside of the white establishment, apparently didn't get the memo. To ward off this pesky case, Lake calls in the biggest gun he can find, which in this case is the rising star criminal attorney Sai Arora, who also happens to be a local

legend in Mississippi. Early in Season One, Lake serves as a historian and anthropologist of Mississippi, offering key expository details of why things are the way they are. He has a grandfatherly, Warren Buffett-like wisdom – making us want to root for him even as it becomes clear he does some shady things. But as Season One progresses, it becomes clear that he’s not just some folksy grandpa. He’s actually the one pulling the strings to keep Mississippi corrupt and segregated. He’s kind of like a mixture of Charles Koch and John Gotti, but with the charisma of Bill Clinton.

**Bishop Ronnie Barrett**, 62, is the leader of Jackson’s largest Baptist congregation and founder of an assortment of nonprofit organizations that serve Jackson’s poor. He’s a powerbroker. Candidates and business leaders of all stripes kiss his ring in the hopes of gaining support. He’s so powerful that he single-handedly tipped a runoff election between two GOP candidates for the U.S. Senate when he united the most powerful African American congregations in the state to break with a history of voting Democratic to back the incumbent, who was facing a rabid tea party challenger.<sup>2</sup> He also brought together that same coalition of African American pastors with GOP state legislators to pass the state’s first charter school law – and then went on to found the state’s first charter school, which his daughter now runs.

Barrett is shrewd. You can never tell what his true aims are. He initially serves as a foe to Sai as he defends Lake Allen (and to Curtis once he starts dating his daughter), but the three eventually become uneasy allies as Lake and Curtis launch Farish Street Defenders with the help of the Bishop. Over time, the boys must decide whether Barrett is on their side because he believes in their cause or because he wants to co-opt their work into his larger web of influential non-profits. But one thing is clear: Bishop Barrett gets things done. And you’d rather have him as an ally than an enemy.

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<sup>2</sup> This actually happened in real life: <https://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2014/jul/16/bishop-crudup-says-will-disclose-rest-pac-details/>

**Latisha Barrett**, 35, is Bishop Barrett's daughter and the leader of a local charter school. She's tall and slender – strikingly beautiful with big brown eyes and long hair in dreadlocks. Kind of like a darker-skinned version of Lisa Bonet. She and Sai served in Teach for America in the same high school. The two grew close and had a spark but never wound up dating. They grew apart in the years ahead as Sai moved back to New York and Latisha became consumed with the all-encompassing job of starting a school. Sai and Curtis jockey for her attention, but she becomes more than a love interest to our dynamic duo. She's one of the only people they trust – and her advice is indispensable as they navigate the Darius Harris case.

**Kira Ilgenfritz**, 48, appears unassuming and diminutive – until she opens her mouth. Her booming Mississippi Delta drawl could stop a speeding bullet. She was born and raised in Cleveland, MS, in the heart of the Delta. The daughter of two state troopers, she was destined for a life in law enforcement and became a trooper straight out of Mississippi State. But she left the force under murky circumstances after a decorated decade on the job. She's since been getting by as a private investigator and serves as the lead investigator for the Darius Harris case. She's a master at using her white, dainty appearance as a disguise to play on people's biases – a skill that comes in handy as she begins poking around Ridgeland. She's divorced with two kids in college, so, other than her obsession with CrossFit (you wouldn't know it by looking at her, but she can deadlift three times her body weight), she has all of the time in the world to devote to the Darius Harris case.

**Rachel Hood**, 58, is Senior Advisor to the Governor of Mississippi. Formerly a powerhouse lobbyist and chair of the Mississippi GOP, she has been puppeteering the hapless Governor for years. That makes her one of the most powerful people in the state. She has an unsettling ability to appear sweet and kind when it suits her even though she's cold and vicious behind the scenes. So, when she finds out her son, a state trooper,

was killed chasing down a speeding motorcyclist, she brings every lever of power in Mississippi down on Darius and the Farish Street Defenders. We are left with the impression that she's our big bad until we learn the true extent of Lake Allen's power.

## **STRUCTURE**

Season One will consist of eight episodes that, taken together, will follow the three-act structure of a feature film.

**ACT ONE (Episodes 1-3)** will depict key events in the Darius Harris case and establish the obstacles in front of him and his family as they try to prove his innocence. Our show will lead-in with Darius returning from his birthday celebration, checking in with his mom before going to sleep. We then see him shortly thereafter surprised in the middle of the night and dragged out by cops, baffled and terrified. We will then cut to Sai in New York, in his element. We get a taste of his high-octane existence as a rising legal star living the life of a bachelor, before he is reluctantly sent to Jackson, Mississippi. In Jackson, Sai becomes reacquainted with some ghosts from his past and meets some new ones. He gains a new mentor in Lake Allen, whose case brought him down to Mississippi. He's reunited with Curtis Green (his old law school foe), Latisha Barrett (his old Teach for America crush), and Amaya Harris (his former student). Amaya shares the key details of Darius's arrest and Sai begins to take a growing interest in that case over the course of the first few episodes.

By episode three, Sai's assembled a pro bono legal team that consists of himself and Curtis on legal strategy, Amaya on research, and an idiosyncratic woman named Kira Ilgenfritz, who serves as their investigator. We also meet some key players in the Mississippi power structure who will loom large in both the Lake Allen and Darius Harris cases, such as Rachel Hood and Ronnie Barrett.

As Act One ends, we begin to get the sense that there's a connection between the Lake Allen and Darius Harris cases but can't quite put our finger on what binds the two. We'll also establish a sense of the rhythm and pace of life in Jackson and Ridgeland and why it is that merely being a black man crossing the county line can put you in such danger.

**ACT TWO (Episodes 4-6)** will depict Sai and Curtis balancing their public roles as attorneys on opposite sides of the Lake Allen case with their secret roles as collaborators on the Darius Harris case. That high-wire act, combined with their mutual courtship of Latisha Barrett is putting a strain on their relationship.

We get some key scenes with Darius in a private prison and in court, which expose the cruelty and injustice of the combination of elected judges and private prisons. Those scenes reinforce the stakes and remind us and our dynamic legal duo that they can't let anything get in the way of Darius' defense.

The Lake Allen case proceeds, with Sai winning some key courtroom victories, but not necessarily because of his legal skill. Key witnesses disappear or recant, judges make puzzling rulings, and Curtis' boss, the district attorney, is pondering dropping the case. Curtis begins to suspect foul play and desperately tries to convince Sai that he's part of a rotten endeavor.

Kira is spending most of her time down in Ridgeland, building a cadre of informants and accumulating clues as to what happened on the night in question. But she hasn't yet found a smoking gun. Amaya is organizing key legal research in preparation for a series of motions they present at trial – and in each case, the motions fail because the lawyer they've hired as the public face of the case is too inept to argue them properly.



The Act ends with Curtis getting arrested, threatened, and interrogated by state troopers over the course of a few days. Bishop Barrett learns of this and springs him – and then fills him in on the war going on behind the scenes between Barrett and Lake Allen. The indictment was an attempt by Barrett to bring down Lake Allen, whose forces are fighting back. Curtis also learns that it's been Lake Allen all along who has been threatening witnesses, destroying key evidence, and generally stacking the decks against Darius.

**ACT THREE (Episodes 7-8):** The Darius Harris trial date has arrived and Sai has thrown caution to the wind and is now publicly representing Darius in court, prompting a threat from Lake and an ultimatum from his firm.

Curtis learns that when he was missing because of his run-in with state troopers, the Jackson District Attorney dropped the Lake Allen case. Lake Allen must have gotten to the DA. Curtis quits his job in protest and joins Sai and the rest of the team at Farish Street Defenders full time.

Sai gives a passionate closing argument in the Darius Harris case, but it's not enough. The all-white jury convicts Darius. Our season ends with Darius getting a life sentence, Sai and Latisha rekindling their spark, Bishop Barrett getting indicted by the state Attorney General, and the team at Farish Street Defenders receiving a walk-in client for their next case. They also receive a piece of evidence that will could be the key to Darius' appeal.

The Farish Street Defenders are just getting started.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Ravi is the Founder and Managing Partner of Arena, which convenes, trains, and supports the next generational of progressive leaders. At Arena, Ravi has helped elect over 40 candidates up and down the ballot and has trained over 1200 current and aspiring Democratic operatives.

He's also the Co-Founder and Chair of Second Chance Studios, a non-profit digital media company that exclusively employs formerly incarcerated individuals, and serves as the co-host of Majority 54, a political podcast that routinely ranks in the top 25 for Apple's News podcasts.

Previously, Ravi was the Founder and former CEO of RePublic Schools, a network of charter schools in the South that includes Mississippi's first charter school. RePublic's two flagship schools are the first and only two charter schools in Tennessee to rank in the top five percent of all public schools for growth and absolute performance. Ravi served as Special Assistant and Speechwriter to Susan Rice, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations during the first two years of the Obama administration. He also spent two years working on Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, where he served as assistant to Chief Strategist David Axelrod. Ravi received his J.D. from Yale Law School and his B.A. from Binghamton University, where he was named a Truman Scholar and was awarded the University Medal, the school's highest honor. He's been named a Forbes 30 Under 30 and Crain's NYC 40 Under 40 Honoree.