



JEFF MERRITT

Senior Adviser to Public Advocate Bill de Blasio

Age: 34

Jeff Merritt's job title at the public advocate's office is broad, and that's the way Merritt likes it.

"I am a jack-of-all-trades," Merritt said. "I see my role as demonstrating that this office can have impact."

As senior adviser, he has helped Bill de Blasio with his work on the Citizens United Supreme Court decision as the head of the national coalition for accountability in political spending.

Merritt, who has a master's degree from Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, is also used to thinking globally. After finishing grad school, he

worked for the State Department and for USAID on promoting democracy in the Balkans.

"I've always been a politics guy," Merritt said. "I thought if you wanted to push for social change, you had to work with or in government."

If you were not working in politics, what would you be doing?

"I don't like to say that I work in politics, but I could easily see myself going back to international democracy work. To me there's nothing better than taking disengaged communities and helping people find their voice."

Five years from now, what will it say on your business card?

"It would just say, 'Innovator, doing big things.' I don't think I've ever had a business card with a traditional, detailed title."

If you could have dinner with any person—living, historical or fictitious—who would it be, and why?

"It would be a toss-up between Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Steve Jobs. Roosevelt was somebody who understood how to harness the power of government. Steve Jobs had the ability to look not only at the times we live in now but to be able to look ahead and be able to create a vision that might take 10 years to develop."

-L.N.
