

9<sup>TH</sup> UNPLUGGED

HONORABLE GISELA LAURENT

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

JUDGE LAURENT: And hello, my name is Judge Gisela Laurent.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you are listening to 9<sup>th</sup> Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before we get unplugged from work and dive into life outside of the courts, tell us about your position as a judge, what division you're assigned to and a little bit about the history of being a judge for you.

JUDGE LAURENT: All right. Well, thank you so much Judge Latimore. Well, I am currently serving in the domestic relations division, family law court in the circuit court. I was just recently elevated in February to circuit court so I'm very excited about that. And I started in July for family law and before that –

JUDGE LATIMORE: Congratulations.

JUDGE LAURENT: Thank you. Thank you. And before that I was doing circuit felony. Prior to becoming a circuit court judge I got to do almost all of the divisions because I started out in – I was elected in 2016 to start in 2017 and I did county criminal, county civil, and then I went back to county criminal for a short stint before I was elevated.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. So you've been a little bit around the track, haven't you?

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. So welcome to the circuit bench and we are so proud and happy to have you at the circuit, judge in the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit. But we're going to go ahead and step aside from work right now and become unplugged and see what the real Gisela Laurent is all about. How about that?

JUDGE LAURENT: All right, now.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And so what is it that you do when you are unplugged, away from work, what do you spend most of your time doing?

JUDGE LAURENT: So first and foremost I am a daughter and a mother, and a wife so that is many hats to carry.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Absolutely.

JUDGE LAURENT: And so I have four beautiful daughters and a very supportive husband and we spend a lot of time at home swimming in the pool, watching movies in the house and I have a very close-knit family. So I have my mom and my dad live here in Orlando. I have 3 amazing sisters and over 25 cousins so I'm normally with my family.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Nice large family.

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, that sounds good. And so you mentioned your husband and you know, I happen to kind of watch you and notice some of the gifts that you get from your husband that you've shared with us. And so I wanted to ask you, what is the most memorable gift you've received?

JUDGE LAURENT: My husband gives the best gifts.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, he does. I know.

JUDGE LAURENT: He does. He does. I'm trying to think what's the most memorable.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Or from anyone, not only your husband but anyone?

JUDGE LAURENT: Well, my husband did give me this necklace I will always treasure, and it has a G on it because growing up, I had an Hispanic name Gisela. Nobody would ever know what to call me and I tried to incorporate like an American nickname Jessie, but that didn't last too long. So then I just embraced myself and you know people just started calling me G. So all of my friends outside of the courthouse call me G. And he got me this gold necklace that has a G on it and I really do love wearing it. And people see me and say, what's up G. What's up?

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. So where did you grow up?

JUDGE LAURENT: In Pine Hills.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And so you are a native or Orlando and Floridian.

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. And my question to you is, what is it about Pine Hills that you would tell people is very special?

JUDGE LAURENT: You know it's so funny like, I think that there is something special about being book smart, you know. You want to further your family, your children to have a good education but there's something to be said about people who have street smart. And I think that my people from Pine Hills are book smart and street smart. They have that good, that hustle and no matter where they go, no matter where they land, they'll land on their feet and they're ready to move.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, and that definitely is an advantage. And with you, we can see that. Now, share with us what your secret talent is.

JUDGE LAURENT: It's not singing.

JUDGE LATIMORE: It's always good to know what is not, okay. It's always good to know that.

JUDGE LAURENT: I think you know, time and time again people who know me and don't know me think – tell me all the time that I'm such a positive person. I think that that is one of my talents because no matter what the situation or the outlook, the forecast, I always try to see the positive in everything. And it has helped me not only move forward in life, but move others with me.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's wonderful. Yes, you are very approachable and easy to speak to and get along with and everybody knows that about you. But let me ask this question then, what is it that tests your patience? Is there anything that tests your patience?

JUDGE LAURENT: The I can't do it attitude. You know, I don't have time for that, you know, and I think that's with my kids, with anybody, when I start hearing them say I can't, I can't, like nobody has time for that. You need to keep it moving. And I think that's just because the way I grew up, my parents were so busy that they literally were always like walk and talk. Tell me while we're walking. Like let's get, we have to keep going. And so if someone is like I can't, I'm like, who said that. And so I don't have patience for that.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what's the best lesson you learned from your parents? You speak – I know there has to be many but --

JUDGE LAURENT: There has to be many. Yeah, but I think at the end of the day it's just hard work, good old fashion hard work, you know. It doesn't matter if you don't know the language. It doesn't matter if you don't have the tools. You know, you're going to get it done, no matter what.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you speak more than one language?

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: How many languages do you speak?

JUDGE LAURENT: Fluently two. I play around with French but no, don't try me.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, let me try you. Put a little French out there.

JUDGE LAURENT: You know what's funny. You know what's funny, I studied French for a whole year because in law school I wanted to go to Mount Pleasant for – to study abroad. And I was good when I was in Paris and France, but now unh-unh.

JUDGE LATIMORE: No.

JUDGE LAURENT: I could probably understand it well. And Italian. I can understand Italian well.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. Did you – do you travel a lot?

JUDGE LAURENT: No. You know that's the one regret, if you ask me, what's your regret in life, it's that because my parents worked seven days a week and they really didn't have a chance to travel when I was growing up. I had the occasional summers in Dominican Republic or New York because I had family there. And here, and then I've always been on a track for something. So it's like I wanted to be the first to graduate from high school. I wanted to be the

first to graduate from college. I wanted to be the first to graduate from law school. And then I had the babies, and then I wanted to you know start my own firm and then I wanted to become a judge. And I never traveled and so I do need to get on it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And if you had a choice to where you'd like to travel, where would you go?

JUDGE LAURENT: You know it's funny because there's beauty in everything. I would love to know my 50 – all the states here in the United States, like travel to the 50 States here and then Alaska and I would love to go international. I would love to see all the Spanish countries. You know and just explore the different cultures that Hispanic cultures have. You know it's different to see them when they're here. I have many friends who are from Venezuela and Columbia, and Mexico, but it's different, you know, to be able to go and appreciate what their country really is like.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes, yes. So you know everyone can admire you because you're very beautiful, always well put together. How do you define beauty?

JUDGE LAURENT: It has to be from the inside out definitely, you know. I think that you can have people who are superficially beautiful and they're just nasty people, and we don't even want to be around that kind of person. I think the aura that comes from within and you gravitate people and bring them in and make people feel their best, then you shine. I don't care what you look like, you shine and you make others shine.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what do you do when you meet people like that, who maybe do not have that aura that's welcoming or you know receptive? How do you respond to that?

JUDGE LAURENT: It's like that overpowering smell because I just come in with all my love and touching and hugging and kissing. I don't care how nasty they can be. I'm not going to let that overpower me. I'm going to overpower them and I always say like, my favorite thing is a grumpy old man. Because my dad was always so serious when I was growing up that I was used to the grumpy old man. And so many times I'll encounter the grumpy old man and I will get them laughing because at the end of the day inside, they have a heart. They just are so harden from whatever life has brought their way. So yeah, I'm going to win.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, you're going to win. You're going to make that person smile or laugh one way or the other. That's wonderful.

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So let's talk about food. I mean, I really want to know. I generally can't let you get away without talking about food. Do you have a favorite meal?

JUDGE LAURENT: Listen, I eat everything. I eat everything.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Can't tell.

JUDGE LAURENT: But I love food. I love to cook but if I had to say what my favorite, favorite, favorite all time food would be, it's a Dominican soup called Sancocho.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What's that?

JUDGE LAURENT: It's a pumpkin based because it has squash but it also has like yucca and all the different starches, I want to say, it's like a potato-type starchy vegetables and then it has different meats. So it could have chicken. It could have hen, it could have pork, beef and then you normally have it with some avocados and rice and hot sauce.



JUDGE LATIMORE: Sounds delicious. Do you make it? Is that the best dish that you specialize in?

JUDGE LAURENT: Yeah, I do make it. I do, I do.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. Well, that sounds good. Next time you make a bowl of that or pot of that, please let me grab a bowl.

JUDGE LAURENT: Yes, I will tell you.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. Well, thank you so much for being unplugged with me today.

JUDGE LAURENT: Thank you for having me. It's been so much fun.

(Music)