

**OPEN NINTH:  
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM  
COVID-19: THE VIRTUAL PODCAST  
EPISODE 101  
JUNE 1, 2020  
HOSTED BY: DONALD A. MYERS, JR.**

(Music)

**NARRATOR:** Welcome to another episode of “Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom” in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

And now here’s your host, Chief Judge Don Myers.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Judge Amy Carter, Judge Bob LeBlanc and Judge Alicia Latimore. And by today, I mean May the 20<sup>th</sup> of 2020.

We find ourselves about two months plus into the COVID-19 virus, and these have been some very hard times for a lot of the people around us. It was difficult for us to drop out of our daily lives and to shelter in place nearly two months ago. It’s equally as difficult to reemerge when our daily lives look nothing like they used to. And, candidly, navigating all of this has been an incredibly isolating experience.

Knowing that, I invited my colleagues to spend some time with us today on the podcast so we can share our experiences, and in this sharing hopefully help everyone to stay connected to one another.

So Amy, Alicia and Bob, thank you all for joining me today.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Thanks for having us.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Thanks for inviting us.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Thank you for having us.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Great to have you. So, you know, I always, when I have the chance to speak publicly, want to tell folks a little bit about me so that they can understand the lenses that I see the world through; what my rose-colored glasses are. And it might be helpful

for our listeners to just know a little bit about you and maybe something about you that's unique that has helped you experientially to cope with this time.

So I know for me, I'm a psychology major. And, Judge Latimore, I think you are as well, from Duke, is that right?

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Yeah.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** That's correct, yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Sure. So I actually have some fragments of that educational experience and the things that I learned in my psychology degree that I think have been really helpful as I see my own experiences and I see those things of the people around me to evaluate how it is and why it is that they're adapting in the ways that they adapt.

In addition to that, I'm a behaviorist. I was a speech-language pathologist before I went back to law school, and in that practice looked a lot at rewards and punishments for certain types of behavior. And so it's been interesting to me, as a behaviorist, to evaluate some of what we see around us.

But would you each just share a little bit -- and let's start, Judge Latimore, with you. I called you out on your Duke Psychology degree. Tell us a little bit about you. And, you know, what might be helpful too is to know what division are you currently serving in and what are the cases that you're seeing.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yeah, sure, I'd love to speak about that. I'm currently assigned to the Domestic Violence Injunctions Division, which most people refer to as restraining orders. That's really how they tend to characterize those proceedings. And I'm there to hear matters

where persons are seeking to have injunctions put in place for domestic violence, sexual violence, repeat violence.

And I find that -- not only in that division but in many of the divisions that I've had the pleasure of sitting in, that my psychology degree helps me even as much as my law degree does. And so that's been something that's been really a handy tool for me as I continue to serve on the bench.

I also happen to preside over Early Childhood Court, which is a problem-solving court for children between the ages of zero to five who are in the dependency system, so -- in the child welfare system. So I've had a chance to kind of look at this from a couple of different ends, and it really has been an experience to watch the transition of those who we serve and those who are in our personal lives -- let me speak personally -- as we've gone through this pandemic, to just observe the different ways and methods in which people use their coping skills or their lack of coping skills at times in trying to assist with helping those who may have some difficulties.

I am actually born and raised in Miami, Florida, one of two children. I live alone with two dogs, okay, and it's just me and my two puppies in the home and we social-isolate a lot together. But I haven't had a really difficult time because I was used to being pretty much in the home by myself.

One thing that I've been able to use and to my benefit, and maybe to my detriment, is that I like to cook. And so being in the home all the time, I am constantly cooking a new meal and finding a new recipe. But unfortunately it's just me and the dogs and so I don't get -- I get to eat all that food myself, so I was -- I, myself, was also looking forward to the gyms one day being able to open up, and hopefully we can get to that point where we can do that safely.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** That's great.

Okay. Bob --

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** But we -- hopefully, everything is going to work out well.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Judge LeBlanc, tell us a little bit about you and your background, the division you're serving in, and maybe some of those things that color or influence the way that you're seeing the world right now.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Well, I'm in a Criminal Division, it's my second year. But I practiced criminal defense for 17 years in private practice. I don't find that this time has been difficult for me. My wife and I have been together over 40 years. So one of our favorite things to do is to spend time together anyway, although we're much more used to spending time with friends and enjoying a dinner out with friends two or three nights a week. So one of the challenges has been -- not changed, because we still love spending time together -- we miss the social gatherings with friends.

We've done some FaceTime happy hours, but we've also both been working every day. She owns a business that was ordered by the Department of Defense to remain open to fulfill her military contracts, and so she's had to go to work every day. As a public servant, I have felt it my obligation to continue coming to work every day. I live so close that I can come to the courthouse, and it's been a pleasure working remotely with other judges. But we've been busy. And it's frankly -- I can't say it's stressful, but I notice there's an undercurrent, that I'm really happy when I get home and I'm happy to be home with my wife, just the two of us, to maybe have a glass of wine, talk about our day and talk about dinner.

And I also think there's been an obligation on the criminal courts. People get arrested. They get arrested for stupid things. And it's really made me weigh bond motions and things differently. I've looked at every one and thought, is this person someone who really should be

out, not exposed to potential coronavirus, or is this someone who is still a potential danger to the community. And we've really had to balance that out.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Good.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** It's taught me a lot.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Good. Awesome.

How about you, Judge Carter? I know you've got a little different background as well, before you became a judge.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Yes. So right now I'm actually serving in a Criminal Division. I handle all of the cases at the jail where someone's been arrested for whatever the reason may be. So I've also been assigned to do all of the -- or assist with all of the out-of-county matters that we've had, because during the pandemic the Sheriff's Departments are not transporting the inmates from jail to jail. So there's a group that's been put together throughout the state that's been coordinating and working together on those matters, so I've been doing -- helping out with that as well. So that's kind of what my role is here.

So, yes, before I went to law school, I was a social worker. I worked with mentally ill criminal defendants here in Orange County. So I definitely see -- have had, like, that perspective as well.

But for the pandemic -- I have two small children, so it's been a lot different, I think, of an experience for my husband and I. My husband works -- he's an engineer and his work is largely done at the office. So to try to bring that into the home with -- we have got an eight-year-old and a four-year-old, and so that has been a challenge for us to be working at the house --

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Wow.

**JUDGE CARTER:** -- and also do homeschooling -- hi, there -- and also keep a four-year-old occupied without putting them in front of an iPad all day.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes.

**JUDGE CARTER:** And so anyway, we're a family that thrives on structure. We're a very scheduled family. And so this has been certainly a challenge for us to figure out how to keep that structure together and keep everything kind of running as smoothly as possible.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Great. So let's go back in time a little bit. January, February of 2020, and it's a new year, hopes are high, there's a lot of optimism and good things going on around us. And talk to me a little bit about your sense of the days leading up to that order that required us to shelter in place or to stay at home. What -- when did it first hit you? Maybe that's the conversation, that, wow, this is real; I mean, this is something that we're all going to have to work through.

Judge LeBlanc?

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** I think I'm the oldest of the four of us here. My wife and I are both in our 60s. And we -- you know, we've been smokers in the past, and we both realized this could be potentially injurious to us. And we have not been anywhere other than a supermarket three or four times since March 6<sup>th</sup>. We decided early on we were going to stay at home, we were going to limit the number of people in our house, and we didn't work this long and this hard to have it contain us -- or take us out at this point. So we realized fairly early on. Literally been nowhere and no one's been to our house since March 6<sup>th</sup> -- or March 7<sup>th</sup>.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Wow.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Our experience -- oh, I'm sorry, Alicia, I didn't mean to interrupt you.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** No, go ahead. Okay.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Our experience was a little bit different. So my husband was monitoring this on Twitter since, like, January, and it was driving me nuts. I had -- I need you to stop with the coronavirus. And I remember, he went to Publix, I'm going to say early March, and bought a bunch of groceries and put them in the corona box in our front hallway closet. And I was kind of annoyed. I was like, what are you doing; like, what are we going to do with this food. Turns out, he was actually correct and the coronavirus [sic] has been, like, emptied and refilled since this all started.

But I don't think it hit me until the Friday that the kids got out for Spring Break, which I think was March 13<sup>th</sup>. Because I volunteered at the school on that Thursday for Field Day, and they had all these kids, you know, thousands of kids, out on the soccer fields for Field Day. Spring Break was the next day. Families were still going to Colorado skiing or whatever it was they were going to do. And it wasn't until that Friday, I think, that they said that the kids weren't going back to school that I was like, oh, my gosh, this is going to happen.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yeah.

**JUDGE CARTER:** So I think I was just in denial about it happening.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** It caught --

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** So I --

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Go ahead.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** I've got to know, did your husband have the foresight to buy toilet paper and paper towels and Clorox wipes?

**JUDGE CARTER:** Yes. Yes. Oh, yes.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Oh, he was ahead of the game.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Oh, he was. And I've got to tell you, I really was -- but I was just like, what are we going to do with all this food. And he said, well, if we don't end up using it or we don't need it, we'll either use it for Hurricane Season or donate it to, you know, a food pantry. So he was right. He likes to remind me of it too.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** I think it caught me off guard. Well, I decided to really pay attention in two different ways. The first one, I think, was dealing with baby court. I mentioned that I preside over Early Childhood Court, which we lovingly call baby court. And all the children come to baby court. You know, you can't have a baby court without the babies in court. And that was really one of the most exciting times, you know, that I look forward to every month is being able to see the children that are involved in those court proceedings.

And when I was told by the case manager, even before the court shut down, that we're not bringing the babies to the court, I was like, well, this is really serious; I don't really get to see the children because of this. You know, so it really caught my attention, and that's when I really started to realize we really are going to have to make some major changes because of this pandemic.

The next thing that really, you know, brought it home for me was that -- I mentioned I have a brother, and I'm very, very close to my brother, it's just the two of us. And he happens to have an underlying illness that's very -- pretty serious, and so I was not able to visit him the way that I like to visit with him because of my concern about having the illness and not having any symptoms, being asymptomatic, and somehow putting him at risk because of his condition. And so that was, on a personal basis, how it really hit me hard. And not being able to see my kids in baby court was the way that I realized it professionally.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Yeah. And, you know, for me, I remember sitting at home on a Sunday afternoon and I had caught a news story about proposed limitations on the size of gatherings. I think that was sort of the first conversation -- and I can't recall if the number was 250 people or something smaller than that. But I started to think about work, and I really thought about our jury assembly room. And I said, oh, my goodness, we gather 250 to 300 people in there on a Monday morning, again on a Tuesday morning, and every day that we have trials ongoing in this courthouse. And it flipped a switch for me and I said, I have got to -- I'm going to have to really pay attention to the things that are going on here. And that afternoon, I know I ended up on the phone with a number of our administrative judges developing a plan for how we would start to respond to the virus. And that really, for me, was the first.

It was after that that I decided I needed to go to the store, Judge Carter, and it -- and by that point, it was too late.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** You're in a position that's different from us. Because I have a division, so I have four deputies and maybe ten assistant public defenders and ten state attorneys and, you know, maybe fifteen people in my court circle. You have potentially a couple thousand when you talk about all the court divisions. So I do have to say that I think when it really hit me, there were two things that happened; one, when the admin judges started telling us the courts were going to close, and when longtime friends of ours who have worked for Disney for 30 years were getting furloughed. Both of those events hit simultaneously and both of those hit very hard.

But you have much -- I feel like I have almost nothing to worry about other than my small division and my wife. You have this giant circle that you are -- I don't know how you think of everything.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Well, we're no Disney World, so let's not pretend we're on that scale. But there are seven to nine thousand people a day that come into the courthouse above and beyond judges and court administration staff and clerks and deputies and security folks that I do feel a tremendous responsibility for. And that was -- that really was one of those moments of recognition that this is going to be a different time. And I can't say honestly as I sit here now that when the realization hit me that I even appreciated how different it would be.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right. I remember you calling me --

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Like --

**JUDGE CARTER:** Sorry, Alicia.

I remember you calling me, Don, on a Sunday afternoon, and we basically had to talk through how to take our extremely busy IA docket and crunch it down into one courtroom virtually overnight. And I just remember getting to work that next morning and IT was already there working on setting everything up and how quickly they had to do that. And that phone call on Sunday, that was when I knew for sure like everything was going to change.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yeah. It's definitely something that was unforeseen. And it's unforeseen in many areas and industries. And it's hard to envision what it really takes to keep the courts running.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** When you suddenly say, the public is no longer having access; we have to shut down the courts to the extent that the public cannot come in and have court hearings, we cannot have jury trials, we're not going to be able to conduct business the same way we used to, and we also have to make sure that as we continue to try to make sure that the public still has access to justice, that we do it in a safe manner.

And so it -- on the outside looking in, I don't think you can appreciate how much work was done by you, Judge Myers, as chief judge, as well as the administrative judge and all the personnel and staff to get everything to continue running. I remember just the whirlwind of emails of how -- trying to figure out new procedures --

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Right.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** -- and how to set up in-camera proceedings and remote proceedings, and learning new platforms. And it was just -- it was really an experience and it still is an experience. I mean, we still are tweaking it day by day to make sure that we do the best we can.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Yes.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** I was impressed with IT immediately the first time I came into a courtroom and I realized --

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yeah.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** -- I'm doing a regular plea as if I'm in a regular courtroom but the attorney is appearing by phone, the defendant is in jail by video monitor, and the three of us -- the four of us, plus the state attorney, we're having this conversation. That all happened almost overnight. It was remarkable.

**JUDGE CARTER:** It was.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** When I walk my dog every day, I've had people for the last three months say like, oh, it must be nice not being at work every day with the courthouse closed. I'm like, what are you talking about; I've been to court every single day.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** I've done hundreds of things just by video remote with safe distancing.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes. Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** It is true, it was really a remarkable time of transition and change for us to move from that full access to the building to very limited access to the building. And we talk in terms of court closure, but the court never closed.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Right.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** We've continued -- yeah, we've all continued to handle hearings. And I was trying to do a mental calculation of the number of hearings that have been held, and at this point it's got to be more than ten thousand hearings that we've held since two months ago to today in a number of different contexts and types of cases.

And I want to talk about change. And, Judge Latimore, one of your roles is with a part of Court Administration that we loosely refer to as judicial wellness.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** And I know that, you know, judicial wellness is --

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Ohm.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** -- oh, it's meditation and --

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** You need it, oh.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** -- yeah, yoga. Tell us a little bit about what that means and why that matters during a time like this.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes. Well, it's very important to all of us. And, you know, I always want to remind those who I speak to about judicial wellness that, you know, judges are human too. And even though we may wear a black robe, we still have the same experiences with stress and the same experience with, maybe, anxiety. And so this pandemic did not, you know, take it any easier on us because of our positions than it did on those who are in the public or in other positions.

And so with us being -- we are really a tight-knit group as judges, you know, the judges of the Ninth Circuit. You know, we may have lunch together when -- before this all happened; we would see each other in our courtrooms, in our divisions; we would talk with each other. And there was no limitation on our contact with each other.

When that suddenly changed overnight and throughout the state, I -- you know, I recognized as part of the wellness program that this isolation was a major change and people were in places where they were missing not only their family but their colleagues and just their regular way of life. So it was important for us to continue to focus on wellness and make sure that we offered opportunities to judges, even though we were far and apart, to make sure that we realize we still need to focus on wellness. We still need to focus on health. We still need to try to do a couple of push-ups while we're at the house cooking new recipes.

We also must take the time to deal with the stress and recognize it's a stressful time and it's okay to do those things such as meditation and practice mindfulness. We have boards here -- wellness boards now around the courthouse so that we can offer information that would be helpful. Information that's helpful to parents, such as Judge Carter, who suddenly has two little children in their home --

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Right.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** -- and having to continue to make sure that their life is comfortable and stress free, et cetera. So we wanted to make sure that we continued to offer those services through the wellness program.

And, you know, the Court Administration has been very helpful. We're continuing to do that statewide. We need to maintain the health of judiciary throughout this process.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** And I have not attended one of your wellness sessions, but when you send the announcements when the session is going to be, you also include lots of materials. So I read those materials and it's made me very much aware of the need to address wellness, even though, I'm sorry, I haven't attended a session yet.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** That's okay. We're busy. But that's the first part, is under -- is just taking an opportunity to learn and to, you know, use whatever you can to make sure that you maintain your wellness and your well-being.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Well, change is such a huge stressor.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Um-hum.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** We talk about life changes, we talk about moves and career changes and family changes and things like that. But this change inside of the courthouse has been a pretty dramatic change for the way things operate here. It's rare to see a colleague in the halls right now. Even though we're here, we're tucked away in offices and in courtrooms doing work. Some people are outside of the building doing their work remotely. And so there's all of this change ongoing around us. And on top of that, we all have personal lives.

I mean, Judge Latimore, you said it. We are just people.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** And let's shift for just a minute to that and then we'll come back around to what I think are some of the professional issues associated with all of this for us. But let's talk a little bit about the changes in our personal routines, the concerns for family and friends. That's one that's impacting me personally right now.

I have a brother who was diagnosed recently with a brain tumor. He's been admitted to a hospital and we're now learning that he is in end-of-life stages.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Oh, I'm so sorry.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** I'm so sorry.

**JUDGE CARTER:** I'm so sorry to hear that.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** And I appreciate that, and we're working through this together as a family. But, you know, one of the restrictions is the inability to go to the hospital to spend time with him.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** And so we know that he's alone, that on our part we don't get the ability to see and be with him during this time directly. We're doing video and as many other things as we can, but it is a challenge and it really has raised an anxiety level in the midst of dealing with the COVID-19 and all of the changes associated both personally and professionally; staying at home or staying safe inside of a work environment.

What are some of those things that you all have struggled with personally during this time?

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** If I may, I can tell you that my wife and I usually consider ourselves fairly generous to charities and we support quite a variety of charities. But this has taught us to support locally. And I can't name any charities, but normally we might send a check

at Christmastime to one of our local food banks. And we've never seen Orlando, even with the hurricanes, in such desperate need of food, and so we have been much more generous to our local food banks to help feed people.

The farmers' markets have closed, so we have gone to the farms on Saturdays, with all safe distancing and masks, and my wife and I have bought food from the farmers and then given it and shared it and bartered it with friends. It's really made us do things on a much more local level. And I hate to say it, at other charities' expense, but we feel like it's made us realize that we've been part of this community for 35, 40 years and this is our love.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Sure.

Judge Carter, how about you? I mean, what are those changes in your routines? You talked about the kids with homeschooling.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** That's a big one.

**JUDGE CARTER:** It is a big one. Um -- sorry, someone just walked in the courtroom. Just one second.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Can't you order them out?

**JUDGE CARTER:** I guess I could.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Are they keeping social distancing?

**JUDGE CARTER:** They were. They were. I think they were surprised to see someone sitting right here, right now.

Yeah, it's been difficult, like I said, establishing a routine and a schedule. But one thing I think that we've tried to do to kind of cope and get through is to kind of cut ourselves a break,

right, and kind of have a little give and not just be so hard on each other and on ourselves. I just -- I think that's helped us to really get through it with everyone at home, like I said.

I think you forget how difficult it is for the small people, you know. They are obviously people too, and they take in everything. They're little sponges. They know what's going on. And so, like I said, we've just been trying to keep everything going as smoothly as possible. We've let Allison sleep in and not have to get up at the regular school time. We've kind of given her some leeway as to when she wants to start her class and when she wants to end, as long as everything gets completed.

Dad and I have taken different approaches on it. I can say that I've been the favorite teacher, because I think I've been a little more relaxed with her. But I think that's because her dad wants to check, you know, everything off and make sure everything is done, really quickly. But that's kind of how we've done it, and it's been working out.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** How about you, Judge Latimore?

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** So -- I don't know, many people may not believe this, but I actually am an introvert, and so I'm used to kind of being on my own and being in my own little space. And -- however, the pandemic made me realize how much I do appreciate socializing and being around other people. And so with that, that was something new that I learned about myself, that I really do enjoy having company and keeping company with those who are my friends and my family.

But it also gave me an opportunity to realize how blessed I am, thinking about those who are going through much, much tougher times as a result of loss of employment, difficulties with, you know, providing food and nutrition to children, and having children to go through this experience in life, like not having their graduation ceremonies or just having a different

experience of not being around children to socialize and, you know, just the fun of going to college or the fun of going to school.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Right.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** So it made me really kind of have some empathy and sympathy for those who are having a much more difficult time and making me realize how blessed I really am with -- although I've had some difficult times. Like I said, my brother, he needs a kidney transplant, and so I worry about him constantly. And -- but I worry so much that I don't want to somehow expose him to anything that I might bring to his home.

So those were the things that were able to help me get through that moment where I was being alone and by myself. You know, not in a bad way, but able to process and really reflect on what this experience meant to me.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Alicia, I have known you for over 25 years, and having you self-describe yourself as an introvert is the last thing I would have expected.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** At least that's what the Myers-Briggs says, let's just put it that way.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** All right. So real quick, Judge Latimore, favorite Netflix or Amazon Prime show during this time?

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Oh, wow. I watched for the -- there were a few of them. But I happened to watch this new show *Insecure*. I'd never watched it before. It's a comedy and, you know, real life -- I mean, it was a new one. I did -- I must admit I watched *Tiger King*. I did watch that. And I -- it was just such a buzz, so I took the time to watch that. But I really like documentaries, and so I did have a chance to look over a few documentaries while I've been in the home.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Amy, you have something special you've been watching?

**JUDGE CARTER:** A couple of things. I'm really not a big TV watcher, but this has given me some extra time to do that so I've watched *Dead to Me*. It's a show on Netflix. I don't know if anyone's seen that, but I would recommend it. We watched *Ozarks*.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** I haven't seen that yet.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Oh, too dark.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** I hear a lot about it, but I haven't seen it yet.

**JUDGE CARTER:** It's one of my husband's shows, so that's kind of how I got roped into that. And *Workin' Moms* is another one on Netflix that's -- it's really funny. It's really, really funny. So those are the ones that I've seen.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Have you heard of *The Durrells* that live on Corfu?

**JUDGE CARTER:** No.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Yeah, my wife says we're moving to Corfu when we retire.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Okay.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Anyone who's seen it will know.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** And, Bob, what about you? You didn't share yours, Bob.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** I listen to a lot of music. I don't watch that much TV. I usually watch, like, PBS Masterpiece Theatre on Sunday nights. My wife watches Netflix, Amazon and Hulu much more than I do. I tend to read a lot of books, and I've read several books. I just read -- finished a book this weekend called *Prisoners in Paradise*, written by a guy that I actually knew growing up in a small town in Maine whose mother started developing schizophrenia and sold everything in Maine and brought the family to Greece, and they were basically held by this schizophrenic woman for five years until he was able to get family members to bring him back to

the U.S. It's a fascinating book. And knowing all the characters personally made it that much more interesting.

But I've gotten a lot of books done. I'm reading the last -- the sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale* right now, *The Testaments*.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Oh, okay.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Excellent. Excellent.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** If you read the original 25 years ago, it all comes back on page 1.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Yeah. I think my indulgence during this time has been the ESPN special *The Last Dance*, the Michael Jordan story.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Oh.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Oh, yeah.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Ten episodes over five weeks has really been incredible.

Let's come -- let's circle back around to work and try to bring this in for a landing. As you've had this experience working in a different way, a lot of remote technology involved, what are the things that you would say that you are the most grateful for and appreciative of here in the courthouse, in your personal life, at work, wherever it may be?

I know for me, I just have this deep sense of appreciation for my colleagues. There has been so much change required, so many different processes and systems, and the demands for grace and flexibility -- two of my key words during this time, grace and flexibility -- have been so high, and yet I feel like my colleagues, the judges, the Court Administration staff, all of those who support us, has just been so incredibly amazing, and the things that we've been able to accomplish.

I look back and I don't know that in the three months or four months of 2020 that I would have had this experience to be able to look at it and say just how grateful I am for those folks and their work ethic and desire to serve so well. I've really been impacted by that.

How about for you all?

**JUDGE CARTER:** Same here. I have been so incredibly grateful for my job and for the privilege to get up every day and serve the citizens of Orange County and continue to work with everyone. And it's made me feel like I'm -- not that the pandemic is a problem, but it's made me feel like I'm part of a solution, like part of helping the community move through this time. So I've been extremely grateful for it.

I can't say enough about how much IT has been helpful. Any time you can call, they'll call you right back, they'll email you. Every single judge that I've emailed on a case throughout this time has responded so quickly and has been so helpful. I've called people with numerous different questions and everyone has really, I think, banded together and worked really well. So I think those things have been really good.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** And just echoing behind that, you know, I agree with what you both have shared with regards to our colleagues and the -- it's been such a pleasure to be just a judge in the Ninth Judicial Circuit. You know, I will get an email at least once, or a call once, saying, how are you doing, I hope all is well; just checking up on me. And we all seem to check up on each other because we don't get to see each other as often as we did before.

But in addition to that, what I really appreciated is the fact that even when we were able to have the remote hearings, either by telephone conference or by video conference, with the public, they have been very patient with us. You know, even though we've had to reset some hearings because initially we were trying to get things in order, and we were not able to have in-

person hearings so we needed to figure out and learn the new platforms for video conferencing or setting up the circuit TVs -- opportunities -- but I've had litigants on the phone who were -- you know, maybe our connection isn't corrected, but they have been very patient with the court, very patient with us learning these new means of conducting these proceedings. And also just the appreciation for the other workers in the judicial system; the corrections officers --

**JUDGE CARTER:** Absolutely.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** -- the police officers, the case workers --

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Yes.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** -- you know, the clerks, the staff. I mean, everyone who keeps this going, you know, and keeps it up and running and who are out there in the forefront and in the front lines making sure that everyone is in place and are able to be able to continue to address their issues before the court. I truly appreciate what they do to help us and to help those who need access to the courts.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Excellent.

Judge LeBlanc?

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** I am more shocked at all the technology that was right under my nose that I have ignored. And having spent three months learning something as simple as setting up a Team meeting, setting up a Zoom meeting. And by the way, we've had to do it on some of our groups -- non-legal groups -- or non-court groups. I've been the president of the Inns of Court all year, and we had to set up Zoom meetings to have our board meeting, which we have to have. So the technology that I have ignored but am now learning to use has been wonderful.

I've also found that all of the attorneys have been very gracious. When one wants to resolve a case, when one wants to get a client out of jail, when one wants to terminate probation

or somebody wants to put someone in jail because they've done wrong, all the attorneys -- I feel that they have been more cooperative than in the past and been very graceful with each other. I'm very appreciative of that.

I think we'll end up doing some things permanently differently in the future because we have to protect the public and we're going to have to take precautions for some time. But I think the attorneys have all taught themselves to deal with each other very well. I'm very, very pleased about that.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Yeah. I think that's around the board, that we've learned that it's okay to be kinder, and this has gotten us to the point where we realize this is a good time for everyone to be a little bit kinder to each other.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Yes.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** And we see that in different areas.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Yeah. So Judge Amy Carter, Judge Bob LeBlanc and Judge Alicia Latimore, thank you so much for joining me today, for opening a little bit about your life and the concerns and changes and things that have gone on, and especially for your expressions of gratitude to the people that help make what we do work.

I'm grateful for you all and appreciate this time. And we'll sign off now. Thank you.

**JUDGE CARTER:** All right. Thank you.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Thank you for having us.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Thank you.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Good to see you guys.

**JUDGE LEBLANC:** Take care.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Take care. Be safe.

**JUDGE CARTER:** You too.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Be well.

**JUDGE CARTER:** Of course. Bye-bye.

**JUDGE LATIMORE:** Bye.

**CHIEF JUDGE MYERS:** Bye.

**NARRATOR:** You've been listening to "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" brought to you by Chief Judge Don Myers and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida. For more information about the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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