

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

RE-RELEASE: WOMEN IN ROBES

EPISODE 172

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HOSTED BY: CHIEF JUDGE FREDERICK J. LAUTEN

1 (Music.)

2 >> Welcome to another episode of "Open Ninth:
3 Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" in the Ninth Judicial
4 Circuit Court of Florida.

5 And now here's your host, Chief Judge Frederick J.
6 Lauten.

7 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, welcome to "Open Ninth."
8 I'm here today with my colleagues and good friends, Circuit
9 Judge Alice Blackwell and Orange County Judge Nancy Clark.
10 They are two of the 31 women judges who currently sit on the
11 bench in the Ninth Judicial Circuit.

12 So for our listeners, we have 65 judges in the Ninth
13 Circuit, and almost half of our bench is made up of women
14 judges. And I think we kind of -- or at least lead the state
15 in that. I don't know if we're alone. But I know that we're
16 one of the leading circuits, if not the leading circuit, in
17 terms of gender equality on the bench.

18 So first of all, welcome, both of you. I'm glad you're
19 here.

20 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** Thank you.

21 >> **JUDGE CLARK:** Thank you. Great to be here.

22 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And let me give our listeners
23 just a little bit of background on both of you, and then
24 we'll get into questioning.

25 So Judge Blackwell has been on the bench since 1991.

1 She received her law degree from the University of South
2 Carolina and her bachelor's degree from Furman. And, Judge
3 Blackwell, I guess when you took the bench, there were 38
4 judges, not 65. But five of those judges were women.

5 And Judge Clark has been on the bench since 2000, and
6 she and I worked together in the State Attorney's Office many
7 years ago, more years for me than you. And she received
8 her -- both her law degree and Bachelor's of Arts degree from
9 the University of Florida.

10 And when Judge Clark took the bench in 2000, there were
11 52 judges, so a few more than when Judge Blackwell started.
12 And then the number of women judges had grown from five to
13 11. And now we have 65 total judges, as I said, and 31
14 judges are women. So we'll talk about that growth in just a
15 moment.

16 And I could really spend the rest of the podcast telling
17 our listeners about the committee assignments and the
18 chair -- chairs that both of our judges have occupied, in all
19 kinds of judicial activities from conferences to educational
20 opportunities and the awards that they've received, including
21 Jurist of the Year and -- but I'd take up the whole broad --
22 podcast for that.

23 But if you'll bear with me or forgive me, I'm gonna hold
24 off on that for just a bit, because I want to get into some
25 conversation with you.

1 So recently, I think the *New York Times* reported that
2 for the first time in U.S. history, about half of the -- no,
3 more than half of the law students in America are women. So
4 that they make up more than half and are now in the majority
5 of students in law school.

6 So what I'm curious about is how each of you decided on
7 a career in law, and let me start with you, Judge Blackwell,
8 and then we'll go to Judge Clark.

9 **>> JUDGE BLACKWELL:** Well, I had an uncle who was a
10 judge, and he was my Uncle Joe, and his name was Joseph Moss,
11 and he was a judge in South Carolina. And when I went to my
12 family reunions as a child, he was the most interesting,
13 funny -- the -- just one that everybody loved to talk to. He
14 told great stories and I got to hear about the courtroom and
15 what he did.

16 And so I got intrigued with law at a very young age. So
17 when I was eight or nine years old, if you asked me -- in
18 South Carolina, I got called by two names. They'd say, Alice
19 Louise, what do you want to be when you grow up? And I said,
20 I want to be a judge. And that was because of Uncle Joe.
21 And he eventually became the chief justice of the South
22 Carolina Supreme Court.

23 **>> CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow. That's -- congratulations.
24 That's very cool.

25 **>> JUDGE BLACKWELL:** And -- it was very cool. And I

1 spent a lot of time, um, with him in York, South Carolina,
2 where he lived and practiced and got to see his, um -- the
3 way he lived and what he did with his life, and I thought
4 that was something I wanted to do.

5 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Did he encourage you to consider
6 law or was it that there weren't women in law school at the
7 time, so he didn't even think in those terms?

8 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** He really didn't think in those
9 terms. I just as a kid just thought I like what he does, and
10 I'd like to do what he does.

11 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great.

12 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** It looks like great work and
13 interesting, and it looked compelling to me, and I thought
14 that was a great thing to do.

15 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And so your Uncle Joe was kind
16 of the reason why you had an interest and a path towards law?

17 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** And he came --

18 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's great.

19 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** -- and held the Bible for me when I
20 was sworn in as a judge here so it was just --

21 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** That's fabulous.

22 >> **JUDGE BLACKWELL:** -- the best.

23 >> **CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great.

24 Judge Clark, how about you?

25 >> **JUDGE CLARK:** Well, unlike Judge Blackwell, I did not