

**OPEN NINTH:**  
**CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM**  
**A NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN**  
**EPISODE 70**  
**MARCH 19, 2019**  
**HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN**

(Music)

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

Now here’s your host, Chief Judge Frederick J. Lauten.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Good afternoon, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Sheriff John Mina. I’m sure most of our listeners know Sheriff Mina’s story, but let me spend a minute and just talk about it.

Sheriff Mina previously was the Chief of Police for the Orlando Police Department. He was appointed that -- to that position by Mayor Buddy Dyer in 2014, after having spent 24 years with the Orlando Police Department. So he had been in numerous divisions within the department before he assumed the Chief’s position, commanding about 1,000 sworn and civilian OPD personnel and 100 volunteers.

Sheriff Mina has a deep history with Orange County. He’s lived in the county for about 30 years. He is married and has two children. And he has a lifetime of public service, almost all of it in protecting and serving others. The 30 years I mentioned is working with the Orlando Police Department, but also he was a member of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division of the U.S. Army and a Military Police Officer. And, as I’ve said, he’s dedicated his life to public service.

So we’re thrilled that you could take time out of your job because we know the Sheriff’s job is a pretty demanding one. We appreciate you being here today.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Happy to be here, and thanks for having me on your podcast.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Great. It’s just -- glad to have you.

And I thought, if we could, let’s -- can we talk a little bit about scams and the public, and then we’ll maybe work our way a little bit into the role that deputy sheriffs play in this building,

because they kind of play a unique role, and then maybe open it up to sort of general law enforcement questions.

But I know that the Sheriff's Office monitors and often arrests people for scams that are being committed. And I was surprised in researching this to learn that Florida's a pretty popular state -- well, maybe I wasn't that surprised -- but a popular state for scams.

Can you tell our listeners, what are some of the more common scams that are happening in our community?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. So we deal with all kinds of scams; fraudulent rental scams, phishing scams, jury duty scams, which we can talk about.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** We're going to talk about that one.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, definitely. And, you know, it's just people trying to take advantage of people. Certainly, our elderly are at risk because of their trusting nature. We have a large elderly population here, as you know. So these people are -- you know, and they're calling many, many citizens and folks and -- all in an attempt to get that one person who unfortunately, you know, falls prey to an individual scam. And it could be done on the phone or via the computer, the phishing scams that people send out.

Yeah, we've had officers and deputies fall for those scams as well. You know, they act like they're, you know, from your technology management or your information management and they send you an email saying, hey, you know, please re-log in, use your password; and then they have everything. So --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So are most of the scam artists after money or personal information to -- would ultimately lead to control of money?

**SHERIFF MINA:** That's correct. So either they're directly asking for money, and they use a variety of different ruses to do that, or they're asking for information. You know, just to give you an idea, when I was with the City of Orlando there was a phishing scam, and what they did was they were able to access personal information and then therefore access direct deposit accounts and account numbers and names of where, you know, our officers were getting paid.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow. That's -- and it was happening to actual law enforcement officers having --

**SHERIFF MINA:** Happened to law enforcement officers.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Let's work down a couple of scams, if we can. And since you mentioned jury scams earlier, if we can, I know in my term as Chief, a neighbor of mine came to me, and he was an attorney -- I'm not going to identify him -- but he said, I think maybe we are the victims of scam because we were out of the country and we returned and my wife got a phone call saying that she missed jury duty and there was a warrant out for her arrest, but that if she sent \$500 to a certain place the warrant would be quashed. And I immediately said, don't send money to anybody because we don't demand payment if you miss jury duty.

In fact, we send letters, follow-up letters, saying, you missed jury duty, we'd like to reschedule you. And then maybe once or twice a year, as Chief, I've had hearings where I've considered whether to hold someone in contempt or not, at least remind people.

But we've never asked for money up front, and we've never asked for money in any email and we would never do that. And I think that's probably true of all kinds of schemes that say, law enforcement is about to come arrest you unless you send some money somewhere.

You-all would never, in an email, say, send us money and then we won't arrest you, would you?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Never. And so that should be the first clue. Anytime someone is calling or emailing and there's usually some demand for money and there's some time limit on it, that's a pretty good indication that it's a scam. You know, government agencies, law enforcement certainly, the County, the court system, would never call asking for you to send money. So that's definitely your first clue that it is a scam.

And, you know, you could always -- my advice is, you know, hang up immediately and then look up --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Call law enforcement.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, call law enforcement, call your local Sheriff's Office or Police Department, or call a government entity. Because it's not just jury duty scams, it's not just different government agencies. It could be the cable company, it could be the phone company.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** And, you know, all those numbers are easily accessible.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, we're going to work into some other scams. This is really going to aggravate you when I tell you this. But the person said, I'm a detective with the Sheriff's department and you're about to be arrested, but you can call me back at this number to confirm. And of course it was the scam artist's number, and they called and said, I'm Detective Jones. And then I said, don't call that number, call -- and gave them the Sheriff's sort of Operations number or Command Center, I forget which -- anyway, call there. And I also said, don't ever wire money, deliver money -- hold on for a moment -- anyway, that was pretty -- and then we -- here on our website, I think that your predecessor did a PSA announcement with us on film just saying, we would never do that.

So there's that scam. Then there's the sort of pigeon-drop scam, like, you're entitled to \$1,000 if you send us, you know, \$500 first, or \$10,000 if you send us \$1,000. And that's a pretty common scam that always is a ruse, isn't that right?

**SHERIFF MINA:** That's correct. So, you know, even I've been -- I wouldn't say a victim, but people attempt to, you know, send me money all the time. And how it happens is, you know, people will send you a check for \$5,000 and usually some information to contact them and say, if -- you can cash this check and -- but first you have to send, you know, this person, this bank, \$4,000. And, again, those are all great indicators that -- you know, if you're not expecting \$5,000 in the mail, if you're not expecting \$300 in the mail, you know, nothing is for free, as we know.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** So those are all great indicators. But, you know, some folks, especially our elderly, you know, can fall prey to those type of ruses.

And as far as the law enforcement scams, no detective or legitimate law enforcement agency would ever call to say that you have a warrant, to turn yourself in, and then of course would demand any type of money --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** -- in restitution over the phone. You know, usually the people that we are looking for know that they have a warrant for arrest or know that they've been involved in some type of activity. So, again, hang up on those people and call your local Sheriff's department or Police Department.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So, Sheriff, the scams where someone asks for money -- it's kind of easy to tell our listeners, be conscious that, you know, if someone's calling you for

money, you probably want to confirm your next step before you just automatically take it.

That's pretty easy,

But some of the more difficult scams, you know, that seem legit is someone's not calling for money but wants a lot of personal information like, you qualify for Medicare, but if you will confirm your Medicare number and your Social Security number because we have a claim for you. And if they know -- you know, they're probably just taking a shot in the dark, but if someone ever sent in a claim -- giving out your Social Security number, that is so dangerous these days, isn't it?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, never, ever give out that type of personal information over the phone. And, again, the banks and government entities will never ask you for that information over the phone. And, you know, your insurance company, those type of places, they have your information already. So, you know, again, hang up, look for the real number, call them to ask them -- and then they will immediately tell you that, no, we're not going to ask you for your Social Security number or your driver's license number or your bank account information.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So one of the problems is these folks -- they're such great sales people. They're, you know, real con artists. You know, they can talk up a blue streak and so they seem so convincing. But I often say, if you were just a legitimate sales person, you'd make a lot of money.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, they can be very convincing, especially when they have just a little bit of information. You know, even a person like me who goes through great lengths to block a lot of their personal information, whether it be tax records or addresses, there are still plenty of different websites where people can pay to get just enough information about you, whether that be a relative's name, a town that you may have lived in --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah.

**SHERIFF MINA:** -- and so they use that to make themselves even more convincing.

And then the other thing they do is they play the numbers. So they're calling, you know, hundreds and hundreds of people every single day. When someone hangs up on them, knowing it's a scam, they'll just call the next person, so --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So about 15 minutes ago, I was in my hearing room and my phone rang, and it rarely rings directly. It's -- it goes through my assistant. And I answered it and someone said, we just got a call from this number. And I said, that just doesn't sound right. And they said, well, what number is this. And I just about gave out my number automatically. It was an automatic response. And my assistant ran in and said, what are you doing; don't give out this number. And it's -- you know, sometimes it just happens so fast you're like, oh, my -- and then you -- as soon as you're done you're like, what did I just do.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. And, again, a lot of people do fall for that because, you know, we're all -- I think everyone's kind of trusting in nature.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** I think a good piece of advice is to get on the Do Not Call Registry, and it's very easy to do. It's [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov).

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Is that working the way it's intended, in your opinion, Sheriff, that the Do Not Call Registry is effective?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, I think it helps to a certain extent. But there's just so many different entities out there, you know, that have access to your number. And, you know, many times, unfortunately, when we sign up for a lot of, you know, different licenses and permits and websites, you know, we're clicking that I agree and, you know, sometimes that I agree to the



terms may be that, you know, your information will be sold to other third parties, and that's how they get your number.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah. Yeah.

**SHERIFF MINA:** So it's very, very difficult for all of us.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Let me ask you this, Sheriff. Are there scams that involve people asking to meet face to face with people, and that does that -- are there many of those scams? Let's start with that.

**SHERIFF MINA:** So, usually, the face-to-face scams are involving lottery scams usually at a convenience store where a person will approach usually an elderly person and say -- or not --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** -- or maybe sometimes people who have trouble speaking English, and they'll approach them and say, hey, I just won the lottery but, you know, can you cash this lottery ticket for me. And they make up a variety of excuses; you know, I'm actually wanted by the law, you know, I'm not allowed in that store, they kicked me out of there the other day so, you know, if you give me, you know, \$400, you can have this \$500 lottery ticket. So those are usually the ones that are done face to face.

And then of course many times contractors who are not on the up-and-up will try and take advantage of our elderly folks as far as renovations is the one that I've seen that --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** After hurricanes and disasters.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. And you [sic] pay thousands and thousands of dollars for renovations that they do not need.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** What -- is there anything that our citizens can do to protect themselves, especially in that latter category where we've had hurricanes and there's roof damage or structural damage or -- is there something that can be done?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. For all those type, make sure you're working through your insurance company. You know, they will be able to connect you with legitimate contractors, probably someone that they use. And, you know, if someone just shows up in a truck saying they want to take a look at your roof, you know, absolutely not. Make sure you go through your insurance first.

And, you know, the best way a lot of times is through word of mouth. You know, when I, you know, want work done around my house, I always, you know, ask trusted friends, do you have someone that you've been using for years. And sometimes those type of people are sometimes the best workers.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** I read that while Seniors pay the most amount of money on average to scammers, that Millennials are scammed at about the same number or greater number than Seniors, which kind of surprised me. But maybe I shouldn't be surprised about any group of people who can, you know, fall victim to sophisticated con artists.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. And I think especially in this day and age of -- you know, everything is so fast now with phones and text messages and the internet and, you know, it's easy to -- especially for Millennials to get caught up in like, oh, I got this email, let me just -- I'll just click on it and, you know, I'll give them some of my information, you know, then I won't have to worry about that. And that's how it happens. That's how a lot of the -- I would imagine a lot of our Millennials fall prey to the phishing scams, especially through computers and clicking on links where they really don't know the source of that link and then entering, you

know, just regular information, log-in information, and then, you know, the bad guys have everything.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Anything else about scams that you want our listeners to know? If not, I'm going to shift over to your new job.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. I would just say again, you know, don't ever feel -- don't let especially a telephone scammer, you know, put you on some type of notice that something is going to happen to you if you don't pay this money right now. That's the best indication that it is a scam because, you know, that just doesn't happen. Law enforcement would never do that to you. Certainly a government entity would never do that to you.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Do you mind if people call the Sheriff's Office just to say, I'm not sure, it might be legit, might not be legit?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. That's great advice. We would rather you call us and -- so we can, you know, get to the bottom of it, and maybe we'll catch the bad guy.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah. That would be -- in my friend's case again, he was asked to go and get a card with money on it. And that -- as soon as I heard that -- I mean, everything I heard -- but that one was like, oh, my gosh, don't -- please don't do that; don't go get a card at a 7-Eleven and give it or mail it to somebody.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah, that's just another way that, you know, the bad guys will, you know, try not -- an effort not to be tracked. You know, then they'll end up selling that gift card or using it, you know.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right. Well, let's switch gears a little bit. How many days in as Sheriff so far, roughly?

**SHERIFF MINA:** A couple months now; three months.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Couple of months.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yes.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So we know that OPD was about 1,000 employees. How big is the Sheriff's department?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Almost 2600, so more than double the size.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And what's your first impressions about the difference between being Chief of the Orlando Police Department and Sheriff of Orange County?

**SHERIFF MINA:** I do get that -- asked that question a lot. And so the biggest difference is the independence, the autonomy of being an elected official. And, you know, I did -- I loved working for the City of Orlando, I loved working for Mayor Dyer and his staff. But, you know, you were just one of, you know, nine or ten other department directors.

At the Sheriff's Office, you're elected and officially answer to the people, and really you have complete control of that agency and the decisions that are made. You know, obviously I'll go before the Mayor and the County Commission to ask for a budget, but once that budget is set, you know, it's mine to control and make the decisions that I think are best for the safety of this community.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** I know you don't report to the Mayor, so to speak, because the public elected you. You report in the sense that your budget comes from the County. And of course the current Mayor is your former, you know, officer-holder as Sheriff of Orange County, and I would hope -- or I would think that would work to your advantage, that he can -- you know, would have a better understanding than any other mayor about what you're dealing with.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Correct. Very interesting dynamic. I've known Mayor Demings for almost 30 years and, you know, we worked together at the Orlando Police Department.

Certainly, when he was Sheriff and I was Chief at the Orlando Police Department, had a very close relationship and, you know, saw each other and talked to each other a lot about different issues and crime focuses in the county.

Now, that is -- it's a great point, because I don't have -- I wouldn't have to explain to him why we need a particular piece of equipment or what we're doing in a certain area. He really has a very good grasp on public safety in Orange County, obviously.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** What -- in terms of this community, I'm wondering if you can share with our listeners, where do we stand in terms of crime? Is crime up, is crime down, is violent crime up, is violent crime down, property crimes up, drug offenses? What's the sort of landscape, if you would, for Orange County and crime in our community?

**SHERIFF MINA:** So the good news is crime is down. And so overall -- you know, especially your property crime, your residential burglaries, that sort of thing, crime is down. We're seeing a little bit of uptick in violent crime. And the vast majority of that is involving people who are already involved in high-risk behavior, people who know each other and who -- usually involved in some type of criminal activity and having, you know, different disagreements or beefs over drugs or money. And then the second part of that is, you know, we've had several domestic-related homicides; something that I know we all fight to stop in this community.

But overall, crime is down.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So when you say that in the community, do you get a surprise reaction from community members when you say, really, Orange County crime has gone down over the last decade or so?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. So I think when people watch the news --

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** I'm right there with you.

**SHERIFF MINA:** -- they're like, no, that's not the way we see it, Sheriff. And so again, you know, you're watching a news market that covers all the way from, you know, Volusia and Brevard County all the way, you know, south to Osceola and Polk, so what you're seeing is you're seeing an incident in Brevard and then in Orange and then in Polk, and so it's just a non-stop parade of horrible things that happen.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yeah, that's fascinating. Because here's what I've said half joking but really more serious than joking to my neighbors who say, oh, we live in such a dangerous community; I say, do you want to feel instantly safer. Then, what. I said, turn off the evening news. And I know the evening news hates it when I say this but -- because every murder leads.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And so you think we're just awash in murders. But as you said, it covers a huge geographic territory in every murder they lead with. But really -- I know there's a little bit of an uptick, but for a long time even murders were down, so --

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. So overall, when you look at, you know, homicides in this community, in this area ten years ago and even five years ago, we're still down from that. We did have a couple years where we had lower than usual numbers, so the numbers last year were up a little bit because the previous year they were lower than usual.

But, you know, I tell people all the time, you know, if you're not involved in a high-risk behavior, if you're not engaged in criminal activity, you know, it is a very, very safe region.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So, Sheriff, I know any response by one of your, you know, sworn law enforcement officers is potentially risky.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Correct.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** We know that. But are there certain calls that you train your deputies are the highest risk calls to respond to; is that domestic violence or --

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yes, definitely. And there's plenty of data to suggest that. And it's just so dangerous. You know, we're talking about, you know, someone who may hurt their partner. And of course if they're going to hurt the one that they've been with, the one they're supposed to love, you know, and here comes this stranger in uniform trying to interfere or trying to take action, yeah, that's when it becomes very, very dangerous for law enforcement.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So you mentioned earlier, you have 2600 employees. Is that sworn law enforcement or does that include --

**SHERIFF MINA:** Sworn and civilian. So about 1,000 [sic] sworn deputies and almost 1,000 civilian personnel.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So if I could, of those 1,000 sworn deputies, some of them work in this building, so I --

**SHERIFF MINA:** Sixteen hundred, I meant. Yeah.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sixteen hundred. I'm sorry. So of those 1,600, some of them work here every day, day in, day out, while the court's in session. And I thought maybe you could tell our listeners a little bit about how you staff the courtrooms and the overall courthouse and provide security to the users who walk through our front door.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. So, you know, as you come to the courthouse you'll see many officers -- or many deputies in green, protecting this courthouse. And, you know, we take safety and security here at the courthouse very seriously. Obviously, you know, we're dealing with a place where, you know, both criminals and the public are frequenting. Sometimes has the potential for safety, you know, and I think they do a very good job. So we have a pretty large

staff here; a captain and, you know, three lieutenants, all of their deputies. And, you know, many are involved in the actual security of the courthouse. Some are involved in fugitive apprehension. They report out of this.

But -- and then, of course, we partner with -- contract the security companies to assist even further. So the courthouse is, again, very safe. And lots of people watching out for the folks that are going in and out of the courthouse.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, as we say -- well, first of all, thank you for providing that to us.

**SHERIFF MINA:** You're welcome.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** We're really grateful to you. And I think the judges who work here get to know their staff, the XO and deputies, and realize they would literally put their life on the line to protect not just the judge -- certainly the judge -- but everybody in the courtroom, whether it's a witness or it's a member of the public. So we're really grateful for that.

In every Criminal courtroom there are a number of court deputies, and then there's a deputy in every single courtroom. And we're grateful for that. It's interesting because internally I think we -- you know, the public probably thinks, oh, the most dangerous place in the courthouse is also a Criminal court.

And while any courtroom has risks, we're also concerned about the judges in the Domestic courtrooms, because -- well, I've said for a long time that people who walk through the front door here are usually anxious about something. Unless they're coming here to adopt a child or get married, as they go through the door they're usually anxious. A loved one could be being sentenced, or the family could be breaking up in a divorce and child custody could be



decided by the judge, so it's -- people are anxious. And -- but in the Domestic division, especially, we're concerned because it's so traumatic when families split up through divorce and there are child custody issues.

**SHERIFF MINA:** It really is. So at any time, specifically in Family court, I think you're dealing with a lot of emotion.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

**SHERIFF MINA:** And, you know, sometimes people -- especially when emotion is involved and tensions are high and they're anxious about their kids, about what's going to happen with the rest of their life, you know, anytime we have that it could be, you know, just the little push to -- for someone to get out of hand and cause the deputies to be involved somehow.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** So we're not going to go through all of our security protocols, because some of them we don't want the public to completely understand.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Right.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** But I worked in the Orange County Courthouse prior to the shooting in 1983. So I started working in February of 1982, so I was literally in the courthouse and heard the gunshots in January of 1983. But today when you enter this building, you're going to be met at the front door by security, you're going to go through a metal detector, we're going to ask you to empty your pockets, sort of like you do at an airport. And obviously there are contraband items that aren't allowed into this building. We don't allow guns or knives in because the risk is so great, and a whole list of things, Mace and handcuff keys, et cetera.

But that's really -- because I was in the building when shots were fired. And unfortunately a deputy sheriff was killed instantaneously, and then two were significantly injured and ultimately, really, that led to their deaths much later. That was horrible and tragic. No

member of the public was injured, thank God, during that. But we're here not just to protect the -- you know, the employees in the courthouse, we want to do that, but also everybody who walks through the front door. And so we ask the public to be a little patient with us. Because security, as you know better than anybody, can be inconvenient.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. And, you know, now that's the world we live in. You know, we see incidents all over the world and all over the country, and some including courthouses. So that's why we have to be, you know, very vigilant. It can be inconvenient at times, but it -- really, it's for everyone's safety.

And I think, you know, just like when you go to the airport, everyone's just a little bit inconvenienced. But I think overall people get it. You know, the same thing with the courthouse. Wait a minute, you know, we can't just have people walking into the courthouse with contraband, and we've got to keep it safe. So, you know, it might be a little bit inconvenient, but it's all for your safety.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, again, I want to thank you for the service that you provide to us here.

I want to shift gears, if I might, to another area, if that's okay.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Sure.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** And I'm curious about this. What are the qualifications to become a deputy sheriff in Orange County?

**SHERIFF MINA:** Yeah. The qualifications -- minimum qualifications are very easy, I would say, you know, but they are minimum qualifications. Obviously, you can't be convicted of a felony, you have to be 21 years of age and be a U.S. citizen. But, you know, I tell people the

most qualified applicant is one who has completed their education and/or has military or some type of life experience.

You know, we rarely hire someone, I would say, like right out of school or maybe times -- right out the military. Probably the -- one of the most highly qualified candidates we get, and it happens quite often, someone with their education, with a four-year degree, who's also served in the military, who maybe has done some volunteer work in the community, has some other type of life experience, and then -- and maybe even bilingual. We're always -- probably a challenge for law enforcement all across the United States is to ensure that, you know, we're as diverse as this community is diverse.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Let me ask you, in light of that last comment, what are the biggest challenges to policing in 2019 in Central Florida?

**SHERIFF MINA:** So I think the biggest challenges are just trying to keep up with the never-ending, you know, schemes to prey upon victims. You know, the bad guys are always trying new and different things but -- and then of course one of the -- one of our big challenges is the opioid crisis, which I know you're very familiar with.

And, you know, I think law enforcement in Central Florida has done a very good job. I see it -- you know, and right now and for the past few years our community, through the Orange County Heroin Task Force, also through the Statewide Opioid Task Force that our new Attorney General just started, that we're really trying to tackle this as a community. That means, you know, health professionals and community leaders getting involved.

And I always say that, you know, everyone I think realizes that, you know, drugs are dangerous, some of those very dangerous drugs including heroin and fentanyl. But I don't think the average person realizes that that drug can kill you just, you know, even the first time you use

it. And that's how dangerous it is. I think that message is now finally starting to get out. People are realizing how deadly opioids can be, especially heroin laced with fentanyl or other dangerous drugs.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer in the county, how would you grade law enforcement community relationships in terms of trust and respect, and where are we? Are we A, B, C?

**SHERIFF MINA:** I'd say we're an A, but always looking to improve. You know, it's like I said -- or you had said, you know, I've been doing this for a very long time. I'm on the governing Board of Directors for the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and so I get to travel the country and talk to my colleagues and see the different new things that are going on.

We are really doing a great job here in this community -- really all the Central Florida Law Enforcement Agencies -- of having an outreach. And I know that any time that a crisis happens in our community, anytime there's an issue, I can pick up the phone and call a number of community leaders, informal leaders, faith-based leaders around the county, and they call me as well all the time. We're always trying to prevent that next, you know, spark or that next crisis here.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Thanks.

Last question. This is a tough one, I think. How do you think Pulse changed our community?

**SHERIFF MINA:** You know, that is a tough question. I think it changed us in several ways. I think this community has become more vigilant. You know, when you see it on CNN or Fox and it's a world away, you feel sad for what has happened. But when you see it happen in your own community, you realize how close it hits home. So I think it's made the community

more vigilant. But I also think it's bonded us in a way that, you know, few communities are in the way -- you know, I think we were always inclusive in this community of different cultures, of different, you know, sexual orientations, but I think that because of Pulse I think that's even brought us together even closer.

**CHIEF JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, Sheriff, I know you have an incredibly busy schedule, and taking time out of it to join us is a luxury for us, and I'm so grateful to you. And thanks for your lifetime of service, and thanks for protecting us here in the courthouse, and thanks for protecting all the citizens of Orange County and for joining us today. I really appreciate it.

**SHERIFF MINA:** Thank you. It was an absolute pleasure to be with you.

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

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