

9TH UNPLUGGED

BRENDA VELEZ

JUDICIAL ASSISTANT

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

MS. VELEZ: Hi, I'm Brenda Velez.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you're listening to 9th Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before we get started and we get unplugged, tell us something about or tell us what your title is and what department you work for.

MS. VELEZ: I am a judicial assistant for Circuit Judge Alan Apte. Currently we are in guardianship, mental health division.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And how long have you been his assistant?

MS. VELEZ: Ten years.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And how long have you been in this division, your division?

MS. VELEZ: Just a year.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. And how is that going?

MS. VELEZ: The new division.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

MS. VELEZ: I love it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Great.

MS. VELEZ: I like it because you see so many different things that we don't think about, like the guardianship when people are mentally ill, it really gives you another perspective.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wonderful. So when you're not at work, what do you enjoy doing the most?

MS. VELEZ: I love to watch Netflix.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You do.

MS. VELEZ: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. So what are you into? What's your genre? Do you like thrillers, or suspense, or comedy? Which is your favorite on Netflix?

MS. VELEZ: I love like Ozark, I don't know if you've seen it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, it's great. The ending –

MS. VELEZ: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: -- was incredible. Okay, but we won't tell anybody.

MS. VELEZ: No, we can't tell.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I don't want to ruin it, okay. All right. And so do you binge a lot? Do you sit there and just watch –

MS. VELEZ: Oh, yes, I do. Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right.

MS. VELEZ: As soon as it comes out.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before you became Judge Apte's assistant, what were you doing then before you became a judicial assistant?

MS. VELEZ: Before I used to work the City of Orlando. I was a temporary employee and I was working for the IT department there.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. Is there something that you wanted to be or a profession that you wanted to have before you came into this career? When you were growing up, did you want to be a superstar?

MS. VELEZ: No, I always wanted to be in the legal field for some reason. So it was always my goal like when I was working for the City of Orlando, for a full year I will go every Monday, see what jobs were available here and I will come, fill out an application and drop it off. I did that for a whole year.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And look at that.

MS. VELEZ: Yep.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Here you are. So where were you born and raised?

MS. VELEZ: I was born in Puerto Rico. I was there until I was 14, then we moved here to Orlando and we've been here since 1989.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you visit Puerto Rico frequently?

MS. VELEZ: No.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you miss it?

MS. VELEZ: I do but it's kind of hard because I'm used to also the life here in Florida. So it's like, yes, but this is home.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah. Tell me this, what's your favorite color?

MS. VELEZ: Blue.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what's your favorite place to visit?

MS. VELEZ: I love cruising. But I would love to go to Italy, back to Italy.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. And what is so wonderful about Italy as if I wouldn't know? I've never been there but I can imagine.

MS. VELEZ: Oh, it's just the culture, they have so much history, so much to see, so much to learn. It's not the same reading or looking at it. You can enjoy when you go in person and you will feel more the history.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, what inspires you to be better?

MS. VELEZ: What inspires me to be better? I always want to be like I want to give my best all the time. And I always want to treat people how I want to be treated so that's very important to me. And every day I look forward to see how I can help someone or make a difference. If anything, just giving a compliment to that person.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Tell us an interesting fact about you that we might not know.

MS. VELEZ: I went to the White House back in 2001 and I met President George W. Bush. We were invited and it was a very awesome experience.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, that was wonderful. Describe how that went. How did that happen?

MS. VELEZ: Well, when he was running in 2000, we were part of the selected families, because he was going to put – it was like a packet for the tax for families, and he said if he got

elected he was going to sign that law, that it will benefit families. And then we were invited when he won. In 2001, we were invited to the White House.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, wonderful. So I'm sure if you were invited to the White House again you would go again. No, never mind. All right. Well, tell me something you would never do again, how about that.

MS. VELEZ: Marry my ex-husband.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. That's honest. I know that's right. What city would you most like to live in? If it wasn't here in Orlando, is there a city or a state that you would prefer to live in?

MS. VELEZ: Tennessee, the mountains.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Is that because of the mountains?

MS. VELEZ: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Anything else about Tennessee that you really enjoy?

MS. VELEZ: It's very laid back. There's a lot of mountains, a lot of outdoors without the heat from Florida.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. All right, that sounds like a plan. Do you have a favorite food?

MS. VELEZ: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What is your favorite food?

MS. VELEZ: It's called Mofongo.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. Oh –

MS. VELEZ: With shrimps in garlic sauce.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. So my judicial assistant is from Puerto Rico and introduced me to Mofongo. Could you tell everyone who is listening what the dish is made of?

MS. VELEZ: It's a plantain. They fry it a little bit. And then they smash it and they put some garlic and a little bit of pieces of pork and it's just delicious.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Delicious. Now, do you make that at home?

MS. VELEZ: No.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Are you a cook?

MS. VELEZ: No. I don't like cooking.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You don't like cooking.

MS. VELEZ: I do it because I have no choice.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, that makes sense because we do need to eat, right.

MS. VELEZ: Yep.

JUDGE LATIMORE: If there was someone who you could meet, anyone in the world that you would really like to sit down and have a conversation with or meet over coffee or a drink, who would that be?

MS. VELEZ: Well, she's no longer alive but it would be Mother Theresa.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Can you explain or expound on that? I mean, I think we all know, but what are your thoughts with that?

MS. VELEZ: It's just a spiritual side and all that she did when she was alive. And that kind of inspired me and it's like someone that I would like to learn from and be a better person.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's wonderful. What's your secret talent?

MS. VELEZ: Secret talent.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Do you have one?

MS. VELEZ: No.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's fine. That is always fine. So you like jewelry and purses and shoes.

MS. VELEZ: Oh, yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Right. Do you have a shoe collection?

MS. VELEZ: Not that much. I do have purses.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, you have a purse collection.

MS. VELEZ: Yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, okay. So what are your favorite purses?

MS. VELEZ: Michael Kors.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay. And so you have like every color, or every style almost?

MS. VELEZ: I try to.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You try to. What is it in your future that you want to accomplish, that really has meaning to you? What is it that in the future you really want to accomplish?

MS. VELEZ: I will say I would like to be more spiritual.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, and is there anything that you regret that you haven't done as of yet?

MS. VELEZ: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What's that?

MS. VELEZ: I would have liked to maybe be like an FBI agent or border patrol.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's because you keep watching those Netflix.

MS. VELEZ: There you go.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right. Well, it was wonderful talking to you. Thanks for being unplugged with me.

MS. VELEZ: Thanks for inviting me.

(Music)