

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

BUILDING JUDICIAL FOUNDATIONS IN ANGOLA:

MAINTAINING THE RECORD

FEATURING CLERK KAREN E. RUSHING

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(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 Lisa Munyon.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Karen Rushing, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller for Sarasota County. Clerk Rushing has not just served as Sarasota County’s elected clerk since 1987, she’s also served as an advisor to the United States Department of Commerce in the developing democracy in the country of Angola from 2002 to 2006. Her mission was to help improve the efficiency and credibility of the country’s judicial system to allow Angola to become a more globally competitive economy. We are thrilled to have the chance to discuss this judicial reform project with her today. So thanks for joining me, Clerk Rushing.

CLERK RUSHING: Oh, my honor, thank you so much, Judge.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, we have known each other for a very long time, working mostly on state court projects in the arena of technology and collaboration between the courts and clerks. And it was in those conversations that you just informally told me about what you did in Angola, which I found fascinating. And I thought the people of the state of Florida would also find it fascinating. So I appreciate your willingness to jump in and talk about this topic. So tell me, how did you get the invitation to serve as an advisor to Angola?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, I asked the same question because it was one of those oddities where I got a phone call from Washington, D.C. and you’re wondering if it’s kind of a spoof because you’re being invited to go to a foreign country to talk about judicial reform. But it turned

out that they did an internet – excuse me, an internet search looking for someone who had taken a court from a very manual process and transitioned into an automated process. So that was one of the experiences they were looking for as they began to plan their journey to Angola.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: When did you get the invitation?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the invitation came January of 2002, which –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Now, that was right after 9/11.

CLERK RUSHING: Exactly. And I don't think I was thinking very well back then because as I put the information together to share, it's like, wow, that was a very short time after 9/11 that I went to a foreign country.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So in addition to asking yourself, why me, why did they call me, what other questions did you have before you decided that you could assist the Department of Commerce in this mission?

CLERK RUSHING: Really, my questions focused on safety. Was it a safe country because there was a lot of tragedies going on around the world and I was informed that the United States felt that it was a safe country and that they were an ally of the U.S. and so I felt like it was a good opportunity to be supportive in that arena.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Angola had been in some turmoil for quite a long time. What had you learned about that before you decided to go?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, I was told that they had been in a civil war and then of course I did some research about the civil war. But frankly, I think Americans who haven't served in the

Armed Forces really aren't in touch with what that means or does to a community. So I really was not focused on that as much, given that they said it was a safe place to go.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It was a long time – a long term civil war –

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, it was,

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: -- that they were involved with, right.

CLERK RUSHING: Absolutely, 27 years of back and forth with attempts to have peace treaties which failed numerous times and devastated the entire country.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what exactly was your mission when you went?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the mission really was to make changes to the judiciary that would bring credibility to the judiciary and make them more globally competitive economically. And our focus then became on the civil side of things because as I learned more about what was going on, any kind of civil dispute really had to be managed privately because the court wasn't reliable.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And not only did this have an impact on their standing in the world, I would imagine it had real life impact on the citizens of Angola too.

CLERK RUSHING: It did have impact but what I learned from looking at a country that was torn apart by war, their needs were very basic, water, electricity, and they weren't looking to the court for much. They were struggling to survive but economically the country really was focused on let's get our act together and be competitive.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So why the Department of Commerce and the commercial law department, specifically rather than the Department of Justice for an initiative like this?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, I asked that same question because typically you would think justice would be a part of a reform related to courts but again, the focus was civil disputes so that there would be credibility in the court system and in the world. That you could do business with Angola and rely on the rule of law.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So can you tell me a little bit about the history of Angola? You mentioned a 27-year civil war.

CLERK RUSHING: Well, believe it or not, the country was gorgeous. It looked very much like Portugal and as we know from history, that the Portuguese had a 500-year ruling of Angola and so the history, there was a lot of legacy left, but without any real know-how to keep the infrastructure in place. And so everything that we saw was crumbling and there was no infrastructure to support the refugees that had come to the country due to the war. So it was a very depressed place.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Do they have any natural resources to assist them with their – with the economic well-being?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, they were rich in oil and they were rich in diamonds. And that was part of where the funding was coming from – from the rebel forces and so again, that's why I think, A, the Portuguese were there. It was carved out so that it was an economically viable country to them and then Angola felt that once it freed itself from that rule, they had a very rich country. They just could not put it together during this war strife.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So was their primary language Portuguese?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Which might have made it a bit easier for you because you are multilingual.

CLERK RUSHING: Portuguese is hard to learn, not as – much more difficult than Italian but when I got stuck, I would speak to them in Italian and they could understand me but it was – mostly our work was done through interpreters.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So tell me, what was it like traveling to and from Angola during this time when they were just emerging from their civil war?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, again, I didn't even think to ask these little detailed questions when I said sure, I'm happy to go. So I had no idea at the time that no U.S. aircraft would fly into Angola. And that was a signal to me that maybe it wasn't quite as safe as everybody was suggesting it was. So I had to go through an airline that did go to Angola and that was Air France. And that was a reliable airline that actually ended up taking many of the workers, the European workers to Angola to work on the rigs. When I first boarded the plane, I thought I would see Angolans flying and learned very quickly that that's not what people who have been in a war for 27 years do and so they were all foreigners going to Angola at that time. And the security issue was an interesting process.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So did you have to get vaccinated for any diseases or make any preparation like that before you left the first time?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, and so vaccinations of course are obligatory and you can't go into the country without them otherwise they vaccinate you at the airport and so that's a scary thought. So there were many vaccines that had to be obtained. But the typical ones that people would expect, typhoid, and tetanus, and meningitis, and polio. Polio was a sad thing. I never

knew how devastating polio would be to a population and people there, it was not uncommon to see people walking on their hands and knees because their lower extremities could not support them. It was shocking.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. So after – you told us about getting in. The first time you left, was it – was it the typical I'm leaving, I'm leaving Angola and getting on a plane to come back to the U.S.?

CLERK RUSHING: No, and it was somewhat unnerving because you do get separated from your team and I considered my team to be the diplomats from the U.S. And you're put in a room and you're spoken to in a foreign language. And even when someone doesn't understand the language, there's a lot of universal signs just by looking at someone. And so there was concern on my part that they were trying to get money through this process before they would let me get out of the room. And I chose to just act like I didn't know what was going on. And finally, they got bored with me and let me go. So I can recommend that approach to others.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Oh, was that – I imagine that would be pretty frightening.

CLERK RUSHING: It was and it was a female, which I think she wanted my jacket too. I had a red jacket –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: But you do have nice clothes.

CLERK RUSHING: And I was just debating should I just give it to her so I can get out of here or what.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So tell me about your experience when you landed the first time. What was that like?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the first time was a little scary because the rebel leader had just been assassinated and we were about to get a briefing. We hadn't gotten the briefing yet but we did know ahead of time that we were to try to stay away from the police. And that there was some struggles with the rebel forces and the current military police and they were trying to assimilate people. That hadn't quite been fully implemented so there were a lot of jeeps running around with people with machine guns up and down the streets. And very old, old cars from the 70s for those who had cars. But the president of the country and the minister of justice did have us picked up by folks that were driving decent looking cars. But nothing else looked very up-to-date.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And I would assume that you know the first stop after getting off the airplane would probably have been the U.S. Embassy.

CLERK RUSHING: It was – well, actually we went to the hotel first. That was an interesting experience because you have to change your money, which is not unusual when you go into a foreign country, but the process was obviously nothing worked there. No banks. Everything had to be in cash and a man comes up to you and you give him thousands of dollars in U.S. dollars and then he disappears and then some time later in the day, comes back with a brown paper bag with your Kwanzas. And that was an interesting process that I had never experienced before. But they did come back and we did have money so that was a good thing.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And after checking into the hotel, you went to the embassy for your briefing.

CLERK RUSHING: We did. We got a briefing and we had a welcome packet too. The first of its kind for me. It identified some of the things that we should and shouldn't do. But it did



tell us that there was this huge reconciliation and demobilization of the armies on both sides happening and that there were a lot of displaced people. And that your credit cards, well, we couldn't use credit cards basically. We had lots and lots of cash and the postal service didn't work. The telephones didn't work. The electricity really wasn't reliable. And then from a safety perspective you really were not allowed to go out without security with you and open your doors without looking first. And I think my favorite of the welcome packet was, if you're in an accident, don't stop. Throw your business card out the window and go to the embassy as quickly as you can.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And do you know why they had that bit of advice in the welcome packet? Welcome –

CLERK RUSHING: Well, it was a dangerous situation and typically, it would be a set-up to get you to stop and then there would be I guess an attempt to take your money because folks were desperate. They were really desperate.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: After getting there, getting your welcome brief, tell me more about the program and your first assignment with the legal community in Angola.

CLERK RUSHING: So the first assignment was a symposium and those who were invited was the bar, the local bar. And the court personnel, and typically that was or specifically I should say, that was the judiciary. The workers were not there. And so that symposium intended to be a presentation by the U.S. about some of the concepts that were found in the U.S. and the judiciary, impartiality, transparency, and efficient court practices. And then we were to hear what particularly the bar was interested in seeing reform. And so that was our approach to the presentation although it didn't resonate all that well with the judiciary. And so the war actually

seemed to be the reason for, in their minds, for all of the dysfunction. And so that was our focus, is how can we help the court minimize delay and obtain confidence from those that they were serving.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Did you ever determine why the judiciary was initially resistant?

CLERK RUSHING: You know as I reflect back, I think all change is challenging for most people. And when especially at a strategic point, in this case the rebel leaders assassinated and this is the strike line for the country to say, you know, there's a new process in town so to speak, you don't have a lot of time for everyone to come to the same level of awareness and understanding and sign on to the mission. So I think that is what was the biggest factor is they live for 27 years in this situation and you know, here's some people from somewhere else telling us it's all going to get better if we do it differently.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I know in many parts of the world that bribery in governing and in court systems is very commonplace and very difficult to displace because sometimes they look at Americans and say, you all are just very naïve about how things are done in our country. Did you run into any of those issues with sort of expecting that someone would give them money to do a service?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, and in fact the bar was very vocal about that. They believed that it was – the system was very corrupt all the way down to you know the office workers. And that but for paying, your cases disappeared and so we knew that we had to tread lightly on that subject because it can be perceived as being very insulting and accusatory. And so we certainly – we did some skit about what would be inappropriate which actually you would have thought we

were the Johnny Carson show because the entire audience started laughing when we were trying to set standard of it's inappropriate to take money to provide a service that the court is supposed to provide. But the bar brought that subject up. We dealt with it and I have to say we probably did not make much headway on that subject. It's very challenging to do from the outside in.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It is. And especially if it's engrained in the culture for a very long time.

CLERK RUSHING: Um-hum.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So if the court wasn't terribly interested and the judges weren't terribly interested in the reforms, why continue with the program?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, you know, there were probably a lot of politics at play. Again, they're a high producing oil country. They're an ally of the United States. We've got wars going on all over the place in countries that produce oil. And so I think the U.S. had confidence that it would work with the leadership of the country and be able to bring credibility to the country. And also be seen as a good ally to his country. So I think that was – what was the driving force. And the president and the minister of justice really didn't give an option to the trial court. This was what the program was going to be and you know our challenge was to go beyond humoring everybody and really define change that everybody would embrace.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So was that first symposium successful?

CLERK RUSHING: I guess you always have to have the icebreaker of a sort. So it introduced ourselves to the players and in that regard, it was. The media was very excited about it and there was a lot of media attention around it because there was going to be something new happening. The bar was I think energized that somebody would listen. And so in that regard yes.

Did anything change because of it? No, but there were many more opportunities to continue to whittle away at the status quo.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what came after the symposium? What was the next thing that you all tackled?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, I'm a firm believer that you can't impose a solution without defining the problem. And so we heard what others thought the problem was. The judiciary thought the war. The bar thought corruption. And so I suggested to the Washington delegation that I go in and do an audit of practices and see what we could document as a standard practice and what might be missing in a standard practice. So the second trip over there was basically to do an audit of what was really going on. And that I thought was revealing.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Tell me during your audit what opportunities you saw for them to change and improve their system.

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the first thing was that they really had no way of tracking a case. They had a case but there was no index to the cases. There was no, as we know it, a docket book or a docket for the court. And so if the file was missing, nobody knew where it was or why it was somewhere else. And so that was glaring. And after that, there was a lack of understanding that it was important to have an assignment of a judge that was random of some sort unless there was a reason otherwise, so that there was this transparency and awareness that there wasn't favoritism going on in the court. That was discovered that they were doing something like the Portuguese had imposed but they didn't understand why and so that process was really kind of a sham in terms of meeting the objective. So the random sampling of – or the random assignment of judges –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I know in some places around the world it's not uncommon to pay the assignment clerk to get the judge you want.

CLERK RUSHING: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Is something like that sort of what was happening?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the Portuguese, again this was a historic practice, they had two chalices in their practice and they had one where you put the judges' names in it and one where you put the court number in it. And so again, blind process of select one, select one and okay, that's the assignment. So that's what was in place and the Angolans kept the practice up. They had the old chalices. They did the process, but then they looked at it. They said, oh, no, I don't want that judge, I'll go to that judge. We'll give it to another judge. Now, we couldn't figure out why. You know, was it because they didn't want that many cases? Was it because somebody else had a deal for someone. That we were never able to really determine.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So when you audited their system, did it include all kinds of cases or just the civil cases that you were focused on?

CLERK RUSHING: Yeah, we were focused on civil because of the commerce component and – but it was hard not to notice some things and one of the really unfortunate things was a question I asked about the criminal side. And do they have time standards in place to make sure cases are processed within a time frame, and their response was no, the bus broke about five years ago and we don't transport anybody so they're just sitting in jail waiting for the transportation to get fixed. And so you know that brings us back to –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow.

CLERK RUSHING: Yeah. Some of the psychology things where when you have basic needs that are not met, you're not focused on these other things. And so it's pretty sad.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, after hearing the story about the bus, I'm almost afraid to ask. Did you look at their records retention and their document retention practices and make any recommendations?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, of course we did look at that because they were alleging, the bar was alleging so many missing things but it was pretty much your night – your worst nightmare come true. Rooms filled, not in file cabinets, just on the floor to the ceiling. Eves outside the building had court case files in there. It was – it was beyond belief actually and they really had no interest in ever needing to find them because they would just say they couldn't find them. And so you know there were – that was part of our project was to talk about retention. Talk about access, which you know is a staple to the U.S. but not so much around the world. And again they were actually burning some records and burning books, statute books when they needed heat, fire to cook food.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. So did you look at their evidence retention and evidence collection practices to see if they met standards that the rest of the world would be comfortable with?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, and that was pretty obvious because it smacked you right in the face when you walked into an office, you saw all kinds of objects sitting around. Might have been a TV, might have been a stereo, could have been a piece of furniture. And you know my first question was, what is that? And I knew it had to be evidence because they were in corners of the records – in the room, excuse me and so I asked, what do you do with this evidence because

it could have been a staging area. And the answer was, well it depends on whether it works. If it's functional or not, because if it's functional they take it home and use it. And if it's not it sits in the corner of the rooms. So this is a cultural thing.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow.

CLERK RUSHING: As you can see. And that is something that I can't take credit for ever having changed because I'm not sure that it did.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So how many trips did you make to Angola, if you know?

CLERK RUSHING: There was at least I would say probably six or seven trips there and that included they too came to Sarasota several times.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So as you're returning from these trips back to the U.S., were you making plans for what needed to be done or what communication need to be had with the Angolans before your next trip?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, after the audit I actually came back and put a team together in our office here to develop training programs for the Angolans so that they would know how to keep a record. They would be able to randomly assign a judge. I didn't mention, but they had this strange way of fastening pieces of paper to the file. They were sewing it with needle and thread and then –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Oh, wow.

CLEKR RUSHING: -- they would make – and they would make a fancy knot and then every time a new piece of paper came, they'd have to undo the fancy knot and either resew it or stick it on the thread. It was – it was an interesting, I'm sure a legacy of somewhere process so

we talked about file folders and then the storage of evidence. And we developed training programs and so the next time we went, that would be the assignment.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And once you had the training materials prepared by your staff, how was that communicated to the Angolans?

CLERK RUSHING: So the next trip back the team went over and really excited about these fancy written manuals that we had developed and was going to help document the process. And the first day we're there, we realized the people we're training don't read. And so we, that very next night, I mean, we finished the day's training with speaking and then we turned all of the text into pictures for training. And so we were able to then discuss all of these processes for improvement through pictures and they were as fascinated with our file folders as we were with their sewing process of the pieces of paper. I think the most interesting part though is many years ago, even here in Sarasota before automation, there was a bubble gum machine with colored marbles that was used to randomly select judges. And so we would have our administrative order, it would say who – which judge had the percentage of cases, then the marbles would be put in there, the twist would happen and out comes a color and it gets – the case got assigned. So we brought that to Angola, and all these bubble gum machines have you know a key at the top so you can't get in it. And so we put that in place and kept the key so they couldn't take the marbles out and mess around with the distribution. And it was a challenge at first but finally understood that a process as simple as this was random.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. So I don't even want to think about how you assigned a color to a particular judge in Sarasota back when you used the bubble gum machine. Which one was red, which one was white, which one was green, that would be –



CLERK RUSHING: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what came after you went and you presented these materials to them? You said they visited Sarasota. How did that come about and what happened?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, it was an exciting trip really for them, obviously, and we were able to demonstrate to them a mock trial. Again, everything is done with – when they were in Sarasota, we were actually using interpreters that are certified and simultaneous so it wasn't a lot of interference with they speak, then translated, then we speak. And that's an amazing skill when it's simultaneous. And they watched a mock trial at Stetson University. They saw our system and of course were very impressed with the facilities, with the orderliness, how easy it was to find things and then they basically fell in love with automation, which was somewhat surprising to me.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Was automation even a possibility in Angola at that time? I mean, at least computer automation.

CLERK RUSHING: Right. As they continued to express how much they wanted that, the U.S. took the position that we are there to train and not by computers because they did not want to invest money in things that could be traded. And so when I was working with the U.S. team, I said one thing we can really consider is the Portuguese have a system. And perhaps their automation is something that would actually work in Angola because they use the same process. And they didn't change their process, and so that became part of, the implementation of computers actually became a part of the program. And that was an interesting component.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Assuming that you went back to Angola to check on their progress after their trip to Sarasota, what did you find?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, they were doing what we asked them to do. So they actually were accounting for the cases that were filed. I could tie back that the assignment of judges was evenly distributed. I can't really say they didn't do any switcharoos but I mean it looked like the process was in place. And you know I went and audited the file room and could find the file so I do think some of the speculation about corruption was less to do with that and more to do with a chaotic or lack thereof filing system. And so we did find real effort on their part and I think that's what encouraged the U.S. to say okay, let's see if we can help them train in an environment of automation.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: You talked about being at the capitol. Did you ever visit any of the other provinces in Angola?

CLERK RUSHING: Yes and that was at the request of the president and the minister of justice. That was the most important thing, is these outlying places were the ones most severely affected by the rebel forces and given that, our travels were fairly monitored and set out for us because the landmines still had not been addressed outside of the city. So it was somewhat challenging if we were going by car. Often we went to some of these places by airline, but we did work in those –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Were the outlying provinces very different than the capitol?

CLERK RUSHING: Very much so. Much smaller. And more of a rural feel to them. Not that much different than I guess you would expect here if you go to a big city, you see you know buildings and businesses, even though it was a disaster in the capitol. You didn't see that in Cabinda for example where the rebel forces had a strong hold, there was nothing there. No –

nothing. No stores, nothing. And I was staying in a – there was a hotel for doctors without borders and that was the only thing that operated.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. And I would assume if there weren't any stores and it was sort of out on its own, there was probably no electricity, no phones.

CLERK RUSHING: Right. And –

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: No internet.

CLERK RUSHING: Right. They had you know generators to try to keep their, from not poisoning everybody, with food poisoning. But another interesting thing that happened there to me, their – here we have to some degree reliability on transportation. So we're about to leave Cabinda where there's really no services and we're told there's no seat on the plane for us. But we have tickets but there's no seat. And so it's a lot of finagling and we have to get with the court and the court knows somebody else and the next thing you know someone on a motorcycle drives up and says if we give them \$3,000 in cash, we can get a seat on the plane. And I'm looking, I mean, I just looked to the advisors and they said, yes, I think we should do it. That's our ticket out of here. So we give them \$3,000 in cash. They disappear and the next thing you know we have a seat on the plane.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. So was this – do you think this program was ultimately successful?

CLERK RUSHING: I do because after we took our trip to Portugal and discovered that they did have automation and that their – they were very willing to help the Angolans. That's when the program really started to have some impact with the judiciary, really feeling okay, they

were going to step out of the dark ages and enter the modern world with computers. And so they were very grateful.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And is that alliance still ongoing with Portugal assisting Angola or had they automated their system at that point?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, the alliance was formed. The selection for an Angolan person who was educated in Portugal was advanced and someone was selected, and actually more than one. And so the system was eventually put into place, and it is the last time I checked, ongoing with the Portuguese being very supportive of Angola. And I was surprised about that too since it was you know a very contentious ruling towards the end in the 70s, but there was no current animosity and most people that were educated either were educated in Portugal or South Africa.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So we've talked about how you were helping the court system, but I guess I would be remiss in not talking about the differences between the court system in Angola and the United States. I assume they are not the same.

CLERK RUSHING: No, they're really not the same. Angola has a legal system that is primarily focused on the law and case law is really not a part of the decision making for the judiciary. I know I was really surprised when I was watching a trial at the court where both the judge and two civilians are the jury in their cases. So very different.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It sounds as if they come from the civil law tradition like France and some other countries in that genre as opposed to the common law tradition like England and the United States.

CLERK RUSHING: That's correct.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: And having had to – and having had to preside over cases that had choice of law provisions that were civil in nature as opposed to the common law tradition, I can tell you as somebody that likes to look at precedent, it was very unnerving to me to learn that, what, you don't – there's no Westlaw that I can look at to see how this provision has been interpreted. So yeah, that is a very different system. Do they have the same appellate structure or a similar appellate structure to what we are used to?

CLERK RUSHING: I think it is similar but I didn't really get a lot of exposure to that court. But it is one that reviews the decisions of the lower court, but I didn't really see that firsthand.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So what was most shocking to you in Angola?

CLERK RUSHING: Well, you know, I know you've heard of these games that children play like SimCity and other games where you're in charge of developing your own city and what do you do first. The most shocking thing I think was the health situation. I witnessed somebody deceased on the sidewalk and it was mid-day and they were still there. And so the urgency of taking care of public health, it just doesn't exist. And you know not being able to rely on police was fairly shocking. I mean to be one that had to get away from the police, it's not – it's not a good feeling at all. And you know the health again, without reliable electricity, then you're subjected to eating food that's poisonous and all of those things. And unfortunately, I experienced all of them while I was there, but it was an enormous training for me to have experienced this way of living and how grateful we should be in our country.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: So did you get sick when you were in Angola?

CLERK RUSHING: Oh, yes, first I got very sick from the malaria medicine and so from there on out the other seven trips was spraying myself with deets because I couldn't take that. But I did have an incident with the police. They took my passport. That was the one embassy training I remembered, do not surrender your passport, so I finally got it back but I was in a real hurry to get away from him and didn't see something in a parking lot which is those concrete tents that hold the cars. And so hit it with my foot and just fell and blacked out and the short version is, I ended up breaking my ankle. But I could not get medical attention there. The embassy said don't go to the good luck clinic, which is right next to the goodbye funeral parlor. You need to go to a different country and I was going to Portugal anyway so I boarded a plane that night with a broken ankle and went to Portugal. And I'll tell you our medicine is a lot better than around the world because Portugal told me I didn't break my foot. And I had to get back to Sarasota before I learned my ankle was broken.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Wow. Yeah, we take many of those things for granted in the United States.

CLERK RUSHING: We do. We do. And food poisoning, I experienced that too unfortunately.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: I would assume that the people of Angola were appreciative of your visits by and large and were very warm people.

CLERK RUSHING: Yes, they were. Actually, I think the first trip over here was something that they would never have dreamt in their life and to have the opportunity, and that created a bond. And then as we continued to travel there, we would bring them little trinkets from the U.S., which was also very appreciated by them. And the president judge at the time, I

mean, he gave a speech at the end of the – of my travels to Angola that started with I have this vision for our court and it was all about what he saw and how he really wants to lead the Angolan court to a new way. And that to me was very fulfilling to hear that we went from resistance to I’m going to do everything I can.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, it just proves the adage that no matter how much you give to other people, you get so much back from them – more back from them in return.

CLERK RUSHING: Absolutely.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: Well, thank you so much for sharing your story of helping the Angolan people and their justice system.

CLERK RUSHING: My pleasure.

CHIEF JUDGE MUNYON: It’s been fascinating, so thank you for joining me.

CLERK RUSHING: Thank you so much.

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