

9<sup>TH</sup> UNPLUGGED

MICHELLE JONES

PROBLEM SOLVING COURTS

OSCEOLA COUNTY

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HOSTED BY: HONORABLE ALICIA L. LATIMORE

JUDGE LATIMORE: Hi, I'm Judge Latimore.

MS. JONES: And I'm T. Michelle Jones.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you are listening to 9<sup>th</sup> Unplugged.

(Music)

JUDGE LATIMORE: So before we get unplugged, tell me a little bit about your department and your title and what you do with your work.

MS. JONES: All right, so I am the problem solving court coordinator for Osceola County. I know it's a mouthful. The problem solving courts include adult drug court, veteran's treatment court and mental health court. So I coordinate all aspects of that program for the Osceola County systems.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And so what do you spend most of your time doing as part of your job?

MS. JONES: Oh, gosh, a little bit of everything. So the programs are – the programs involve having a caseload – we have case managers and they have clients. The clients are involved with a variety of different requirements for the programs, including drug testing and treatment, case management court. So I follow all of that and then I collect the information from all of it and I try to put it in a format that makes sense for the entire team. So I spend a little bit of every day doing that.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You're busy.

MS. JONES: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, so let's go ahead and get unplugged and stop being busy like that. So what do you spend most of your time doing when you're not at work?

MS. JONES: Being busy. I have a couple of different hobbies. I do home canning so I – when I'm able, I also participate in kind of a farm market circuit doing home canning, making jams and jellies. I love ballroom dancing so I am incredibly mediocre at best at it. I've been doing Latin ballroom dancing for a few years and just –

JUDGE LATIMORE: How did you become interested in Latin ballroom dancing?

MS. JONES: So a few years ago there was community activity that a local dance studio was doing for charity. And they were bringing local business members from Osceola County together to do this showcase and I was asked to participate, or maybe I asked to participate because I love dance. And I did that and then when that was over I was like, I'd like to keep taking lessons and so I continued on with that.

JUDGE LATIMORE: So do you do any other kind of dancing?

MS. JONES: No, not – for fun, yes, you know once upon a time – once upon a time there were the clubs, you know, so that was all the rage, of course, but no, not in recent years. The Latin ballroom and I take the classes and if they have showcases, then I participate in those. It's a lot of fun.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wonderful. So tell me where you were born and raised.

MS. JONES: I was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wow. Wow, that is unique.

MS. JONES: It is a little different. It's kind of like being in a foreign country in your own country.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Um-hum, and so what is it that you loved the most about being in Anchorage, Alaska?

MS. JONES: So I really loved, honestly, I loved seriously the food, the diverse food. I like to eat like a lot. I feel like I'm –

JUDGE LATIMORE: You're in good company.

MS. JONES: I like to eat. So there's a really diverse food options there because we are a very international community. So Anchorage has a lot of people and populations from Asia, all the different Asian countries so all the different Asian cuisines kind of home cooking, not – not fast foody. Like independent mom and pop restaurants.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yes.

MS. JONES: All different kinds of restaurants. And I like, you know, I like that – that was probably the thing I liked the most. And I did – a counterpart to that is I appreciate other diverse populations.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay.

MS. JONES: It was really wonderful to get to see and know different cultures.

JUDGE LATIMORE: If you had to pick your last meal, what would it be?

MS. JONES: Probably cheese.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Really. You went through this diversity and it's cheese.

MS. JONES: Cheese. Cheese is almost never the wrong answer for me.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Is there a particular kind of cheese.

MS. JONES: Smoked Gouda comes to mind.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, that is good.

MS. JONES: I like smoked Gouda, probably pretty top of the pile, yeah.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's interesting. So how did you end up in Florida?

MS. JONES: Okay. So I was married once before and my ex-husband was originally from Florida. So when he left the military, they send you back from whence you came and he had come from Kissimmee, Florida. So I had never lived anywhere else. I had rarely visited anywhere else so I packed up all my belongings and got in a car and headed on the road trip here to Central Florida in Kissimmee. That marriage didn't last but that's okay because it brought me here and this is its own unique and rich community and I really love it here.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Wonderful. All right, so I'm not rushing you but at the point of retirement, what are your plans when you retire?

MS. JONES: My husband – I am married and my husband and I are both avid cat lovers and so wrangling cats would be –

JUDGE LATIMORE: How many cats do you have?

MS. JONES: We currently have three. There's one – they're all rescues of different kinds. And there's an outdoor cat that we may try to trap and have her spade and released to the outdoors because she seems fine but we want to make sure she's safe.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Okay, so ever had a dog?

MS. JONES: I have owned dogs. I had a dog for 19 years, a large breed dog that lived for 19 years from the time I was in Kindergarten until I graduated college. He saw me through all of that but I'm generally not – I'm never going to wake up one day and be like, I got to get a dog. Like that's not going to happen. I'm a cat person.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, well, if you come across a dog, send him my way. Okay, that's what I would probably do. So what are your top two rules for navigating life?

MS. JONES: Oh, gosh, navigating life. Okay, so this is one that I bust out a lot with younger people or if I ever have the opportunity to speak to like students, I really think it's important to figure out what you don't want to do. Everybody always wants to ask you what you want to be when you grow up or what you want to do, but nobody ever asks you to like, have you thought about what's not important or what you don't want. And I really think that's valid. So that's probably the first life lesson. Other than that, I really think it's important to be giving of yourself to your community in whatever capacity that can be.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And you give a lot.

MS. JONES: I try.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You do. Well, I just noticed a really interesting about blood donations, I guess. Can you share that with us?

MS. JONES: Yes, I over the years have donated more than eight gallons of blood product here in Osceola County. Both of my parents have spent time in intensive care units and required a large amount of blood product and it's a small thing that I can do to give back. So I've done

that. If you can donate time, donate blood, donate money to whatever means something to you in the community, I think that's valid.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Well, thank you for your gift to the community.

MS. JONES: Thank you.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what – this is maybe a question you may not – but you can answer really well. What would be your first question after being cryogenically frozen for 100 years?

MS. JONES: Like I've woken up –

JUDGE LATIMORE: You just woke up.

MS. JONES: It's been 100 years.

JUDGE LATIMORE: It's been 100 years.

MS. JONES: Okay, so probably where are the cats, or is cheese still an option?

JUDGE LATIMORE: There you go.

MS. JONES: Those are good questions, I think.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, I think those are very good questions. I thought – I was kind of in line too like, what are we eating.

MS. JONES: Yeah, exactly, what's for dinner, yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: What do you do to make yourself really feel truly alive?

MS. JONES: I really love spending time with my husband. And I mean, like doing nothing particularly meaningful or useful, like spending time with him. He's very introverted and I'm more extroverted. It's a little easier for me to communicate with people. He's very terminally shy. So we spend a lot of time together at the house.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's a good balance.

MS. JONES: It is. It really works for us. And he – so for me, like spending time with him, it keeps me just endlessly happy.

JUDGE LATIMORE: All right, so if I ask you these questions, give me your pick, early morning or late night?

MS. JONES: Early morning.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Winter or summer?

MS. JONES: Autumn.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I like that. That's a different answer than what I'm used to getting.  
Music or podcast?

MS. JONES: Music.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Apple or Android.

MS. JONES: Android.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Android.

MS. JONES: Android.

JUDGE LATIMORE: I can't do it.

MS. JONES: No, I can't do the Apple. That makes no sense.

JUDGE LATIMORE: One time – once you learn a language, it's like it can't be undone, right?

MS. JONES: I got in a rage over being unable to navigate an excel spreadsheet on Apple.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Sent you in a rage, okay. All right, so how do you pick yourself back up after making a mistake?

MS. JONES: Not as gracefully as I would like. I'm working on it.

JUDGE LATIMORE: You're working on it. We all are working on it, aren't we? All right, and what do you and your best friend love to do when you get together? And you mentioned your husband –

MS. JONES: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: But –

MS. JONES: My soulmate is my best friend, Boo. She still lives in Alaska. We go to parks, national parks.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Oh, do you.

MS. JONES: Yes.

JUDGE LATIMORE: And what's the last park you've been able to attend?

MS. JONES: We did – we hit a trio, so we did Kings Canyon, Sequoia and Redwood.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Which one did you like the best?

MS. JONES: Kings Canyon.

JUDGE LATIMORE: Yeah, tell me why.

MS. JONES: It's a smaller park, fewer people but the sequoias that they – I like the sequoias, the fat trees instead of the tall ones. And the sequoias that they have there and the programs that they have there just spoke to me more.

JUDGE LATIMORE: That's wonderful. Well, thank you so much for being unplugged with me today.

MS. JONES: Thank you.

(Music)