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OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
1 IN 8
EPISODE 9
OCTOBER 28, 2016
HOSTED BY: FREDERICK J. LAUTEN

(Music.)

>> Welcome to Episode 9 of "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" in the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

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

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I'm here today with Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente. Justice Pariente has been a justice on the Florida Supreme Court since 1997, and served as Chief Justice of the Court from 2004 through 2006.

She is a graduate of Boston University and George Washington University Law School where she excelled as a student in both institutions.

She's been a Floridian since 1973.

We could spend the entire podcast talking about Justice Pariente's legal career and the numerous achievements, publications, awards. But courageously Justice Pariente is here today to discuss her successful treatment of breast cancer, in hopes of promoting greater awareness of this disease.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It's an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease, especially early detection, education, and support services. About one in eight women born in the United States will get breast cancer at some point in their lives.

I'm honored that as a part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Justice Pariente's with me today to share with our listeners her battle against breast cancer. She is truly an inspiration to cancer survivors. She's also an inspiration to all of us in the court system.

Justice Pariente is known for her academic excellence, her devotion to children and families, to education of all judges in the State of Florida. I am honored to be a colleague of hers and call myself a friend of Justice Pariente.

Welcome, Justice Pariente.

>> JUDGE PARIENTE: Thank you so much. And thank you for that kind introduction. And I guess it's mutual admiration because you and Orlando are so fortunate to have Chief Judge Lauten as the chief judge, who is truly a person who wants to make it better for everyone entering the court system and everyone in his community.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: Thank you. That's very kind. Thank you.

Well, before we talk about breast cancer and your battle with breast cancer, could you tell our listeners just a little bit of biographical information, if you're comfortable, your family, your interest and hobbies. And then we'll talk about your dealing with the disease of breast cancer.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Maybe I'll start presently which is --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- I'm a proud grandmother of ten grandchildren.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Fabulous.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Including the two most recent children were adopted about three years ago out of foster care by my daughter. Unfortunately for me, that family moved up to Virginia, so that's -- I was just visiting them last week, and they're all doing wonderfully.

And I -- some people are surprised when they hear that among the -- what I feel most passionately about is my own family, and my children and grandchildren, and it gives me a -- a great deal of satisfaction to have that role and understand how important, and maybe that influences my interest in children and families, how important those relationships are.

And then I look in contrast to what we see in the court system, children that are abused and neglected, victims in human trafficking, the interests that you've expressed many times in homelessness, mental health issues, and knowing what a challenge it is.

So I love my role. I loved raising my children. I've been married to Fred Hazouri, who I think you know. He is

retired as a judge. He used to love to teach at the judge's college. He's now a mediator in Palm Beach County. And we look forward -- for me, I have two and a half more years on the Court. I am the longest-serving justice currently on our Court --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Congratulations. That's awesome.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** I don't know -- that just means I've stuck with -- in the court for -- since, as you said, since 1997. It's hard to believe. And before that, I was on the appellate court for four years.

So we have maybe -- maybe your listeners know or don't know, we have mandatory retirement for all judges at age 70, and so we call that constitutional senility. And so that will be, for me, in a little more than two years.

You mentioned what are my interests and passions? I love to travel. We -- I just -- to see the world and to see other cultures. Unfortunately, I've done much less of that over the last 20-plus years because the court schedule is so rigorous. So I do look forward to doing more of that after retirement.

And hobbies, I feel very strongly about exercise. I think that is something that I hope all individuals all -- from youth on up -- understand the importance for health of some type of exercise. For me, it's usually walking.

Of course, if I'm in South Florida, which is where I

raised my family, it's a little hot. Luckily, where the court is, we have some cooler weather going into the fall and a little more hills. So I love that.

We love movies. My husband's a big movie buff.

So I think that sort of covers -- as far as my upbringing, I was the first person in my family to go to college.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Wow.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** My parents were born and raised in New York City, as were their parents. And it's -- New York, of course, was a very different city back then. My parents were, you know, raised during the Depression, really. And they -- my mother had to start working at age 15; and my father at age 16.

And when I used to -- my mother's still alive, but unfortunately is experiencing severe dementia. But when I'd bring up that, about her background, she'd always be a little -- why are you talking about it? It's because it so defines who you were and who dad was, as far as the nitty-gritty of having to sort of bring yourself up.

And so I was very proud of that background.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Great.

So you were on the Court for about six years, if -- tell me if I'm right about that -- when -- and working hard and writing opinions and research and reaching out when you got

some medical news.

And I wonder if you'll tell our listeners a little bit about that. How was your breast cancer discovered? How was the news delivered?

>> JUDGE PARIENTE: It was April of 2003, so -- you're right, I would have been on the court a little more than six years, if my -- our math is right. Maybe five or six years. And the other part that was significant for me, with the learning of the news, I knew I was going to become Chief Justice in 2004. And it was also right at the point where the court system was going to statewide funding with Revision 7, a very huge transition.

So I always, from age 50 -- well, maybe even a little earlier -- I would say actually age 45 on, would get routine, yearly mammograms. Now, your listeners might say, well, why would you have done that? And the answer is, I did it because I felt that it was important to just be vigilant about all health issues.

There was no family history of breast cancer, and some people will say, well, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and no one in my family had breast cancer. But somewhere upwards of 80 percent of breast cancer is not genetically linked.

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: I didn't know that.

>> JUDGE PARIENTE: It's not hereditary. And so I had a

mammogram, routine mammogram, and I remember thinking I had to wait to have the mammogram. And then I had someone who would examine my breasts to make sure also there were no lumps, and I did self-examination.

And then I got a call, probably about a week later, but I was in Tallahassee, saying that there were some unusual findings on the mammogram. And that they suggested a biopsy. So they didn't say it was cancer. They said they were just unusual findings.

I then went about a week later to, I guess -- again, the timing does not matter for your listeners, but for me at the time --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- every day was really a big deal.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Because at that point it still wasn't, you have breast cancer. And I had the biopsy and then I got a call, and my husband and I -- if you try to find humor in this, I get the call in Tallahassee. It was April 1st --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Oh, no.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- April Fool's Day. And the doctor said, you know, the findings are that you have breast cancer, but actually, the first diagnosis was that you -- I had Ductal Carcinoma In Situ, and that's important, again, when

you hear people say they were diagnosed with breast cancer.

If someone has DCIS, which means that the cancer is remaining within the ducts, that's the most positive or best diagnosis. It's very different than if somebody has not been having yearly mammograms or hasn't been checked and the first thing they know, not only they have breast cancer, but it's likely spread beyond the breast. That's where the concerns become.

Breast cancer, everyone should know, is very survivable. You know, I hope someday, at least for maybe my children and grandchildren, that we'll find total cures for it.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** So when I got that diagnosis, it's sort of like you have breast cancer. I was -- I guess my first reaction, I was shocked. You know, again by I felt like I had been vigilant.

And there was one other thing from my personal story is that actually, even though I had been getting mammograms every year, I was told that the signs of what was abnormal had shown up about six years before.

Now, I -- before I was a judge, I used to be a lawyer, and I did a lot of personal injury work.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** People asked, weren't you mad that it could have been discovered earlier? And I -- I always

look at this. I went back to the radiologist. I said, was it there? She said, yes. She had missed it.

And I -- because she admitted it, I couldn't be angry about it. But what I then tell people is if -- when you get your mammogram, make sure there's at least two -- a place where there's at least two radiologists reading it. Because sometimes it's subtle. For example, mine was not a lump, so there was nothing I could feel. It was --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- inside the breast.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** So that's another part of the vigilance of what you want to do. And so that's one of my lessons that I learned and I always like to share.

Unfortunately for me, when I thought it was simple, which was DCIS, and it would just need to be excised and then some local radiation, I guess things in my life are never simple, and mine was very complicated.

So I ended up actually going through not only the first -- the biopsy and then the first lumpectomy, which is where there is just a -- a part of the breast tissue that is removed and then they do pathology.

I, at that time -- and insisted -- they also do what's called a sentinel node biopsy, which is if breast cancer's to spread beyond the breast, that will be the first place it

will go, into the lymph system. And that's when, again, you have the danger of it -- what's called metastasizing, which means that it leaves the breast and it's coming into the bloodstream.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Now, did you insist on that because you did research on your own?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I know as a practitioner, if you practiced personal injury, handling medical cases, you learn how to research medical information.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Right. I did that, and some people looked, about the amount of people I called and the research I did. I actually talked to -- there was a doctor at the -- Moffitt Hospital in Tampa, doctor that was -- really had published about DCIS, and it was his recommendation that it be done. The doctor that did my first lumpectomy, I saw his chart had actually said, patient insists on sentinel node biopsy.

So I don't really say that everybody has to be their own advocate, but I will say this: That because when you get any kind of cancer diagnosis and, of course, for women, breast cancer -- and it strikes men too. We have a judge that we both know that was diagnosed and had breast cancer treatment. Excuse me.

So I would say that I -- it is -- if you are the kind of

person that just wants to make sure that everything that's being told to you makes sense and are there treatment options. Because that was the other thing I experienced. It isn't like everybody says this is the only way to go.

So I did insist on this sentinel node biopsy after doing my own research and talking to other doctors. And someone says, well, is that because you were a Supreme Court justice you got to talk to doctors? But when you're going through a diagnosis of cancer, you would be amazed at the -- at the community of -- the medical community and who's willing to look at your records and actually help give a diagnosis. I was very -- I was very impressed with that because I think they realize people are in the middle of trying to make a treatment decision.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** So you have this thing. You have cancer. And then the question is, what's the treatment gonna be? Once you know you have that diagnosis, until you decide on the treatment, that's almost the worst part of it.

But once you think, okay, now I know the way I need to approach this, it's -- then you're in the mode of surviving. And then ultimately, thriving. So it's at that part is -- you can't be -- you hear that diagnosis and you put your head in the sand.

When I was young, which was many years ago now, I --

breast cancer used to be -- we thought of it as a death diagnosis. Any kind of cancer. That's so untrue now. Even though we haven't eliminated cancer, we have so many ways, so many innovations, so many medical discoveries, so many drugs, that can help make all cancers survivable.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So in your experience, there's been these advances in medical technology, including drug treatment, that's made cancer -- breast cancer and some other cancers, survivable.

I'm curious, what about the internet and today's technology, did that make your research into the area easier? Do you think we're at a greater advantage because of the internet or --

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** You have to watch, I think, what on the internet you're gonna look at, you know? There are -- you have people that are -- if you read the internet and you look up something, it's like you got -- what sources are you gonna look at? And really --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** What do you believe?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- and the actual -- right. And that's a guide.

But the main thing is to come armed when you see the doctor after your initial diagnosis with questions. And that was the other thing I was gonna say. You always want to bring somebody with you because it's -- it's sort of like

someone coming into court and hearing whatever the judge is saying, and you think they understand, but they're there in an environment that's very intimidating.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And so the idea of, do they really hear what you're telling them?

And so I'm a note taker, so I would go -- but my husband was wonderful during this whole period. He'd come. Now, he's not a note taker, but he was there, and he knew I was gonna be asking questions.

And as it became more complicated for me, because the first biopsy and the first lumpectomy, they didn't get what's called clear margins. When they do excise or excision of breast tissue, they have to make sure they get every part that has cancer or abnormal findings. And so they call those margins.

And because -- and maybe because mine had been there for so long, even though it was still called this Ductal Carcinoma In Situ, they -- after the first lumpectomy, I had to have a second lumpectomy. And just fast-forward, for me, and ended up with having to have a mastectomy because they could never get clear margins on the one breast.

And then I made the decision that I wanted -- there was some findings on the other breast. Nothing cancerous. I go, wait. I want to have two breasts. I elected for

reconstruction. And I wanted to have symmetry for myself. And it was going to require some other surgery. And did I really want to have to go through mammograms on one breast every -- they would have been every three months.

So a lot of women do make that decision to have a double mastectomy. Now, once again, I think that people have such a wrong concept of what a mastectomy entails. I hear people talk about a radical mastectomy.

You know, there were -- years ago, before we had some amazing plastic surgery, you could see probably women that were -- looked like they were maimed. But the reconstruction is so amazing. I -- again, doing a lot of research, elected for a procedure called -- and this is maybe too much in the weeds, but maybe because it's breast cancer awareness --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Sure.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- just to know it's available. It's called a deep flap. What they do is they actually take stomach fat, which for any woman, you think how -- isn't that a great thing, right? And they put -- they actually are able to micro attach it to your -- into your breast.

So my -- I had a very good outcome. And that was more involved surgery when I opted for the mastectomy. I did it in South Florida. And I -- it was -- again, very long surgery. But the other option, of course, is -- are implants. And, you know, people can have difficulty with

those implants, even though that surgery is easier.

So then the next stage -- and getting to was because it was in the lymph node, even though not a lot of cancer cells, the doctors that I consulted with -- and I consulted both locally and then because it was unusual, my doctor recommended I go to Sloan Kettering in New York, and I opted for chemotherapy.

So after the mastectomy -- so this went from April to June, with the three surgeries. You know, the -- when we talk about what happened, I mean, I -- I did not miss oral arguments.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, I wanted to talk to you about that.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Because I'm listening to your journey, and I know -- because we know each other -- that you never missed an oral argument. You never missed a conference. How did you find the strength, both physical strength and the mental ability, to focus when you're dealing with what you've just explained to us?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** First of all -- and I don't say everybody has to go on like that. The first two surgeries were done, you know -- if you have a lumpectomy, you can actually have that as outpatient.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** All right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And when you're waiting for the diagnosis, other than your mental strain, you know, the most normal you can make your life, sort of the better. I had the double mastectomy, I had that in June. So I actually missed the Bar conference for that.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And then we have, at the Court, we don't have oral arguments in July and August. So I was able to use that time to recover. So for somebody that has to be at the office every day for 12 -- except for vacation time, it's a little bit more difficult.

And I don't -- again, I've had other surgeries. Actually, I've had my hip replaced a few years ago. I am -- I guess, it's just about sort of saying, I'm not gonna let this disease or whatever it is define who I am.

And I found strength from the support of people around me. And I must say, why, you say, do you want to talk about it in public? When I first was diagnosed, I didn't want -- I wanted to keep it secret.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** I was gonna ask you about that. You have such a public position as a justice, and yet it's such a personal matter.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** So I wanted to keep it private. And I was telling somebody at -- I was actually visiting a juvenile girl's facility in Palm Beach, and I -- a reporter

had overheard me saying something to a friend that I had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

And she came over to me, and she said, you know, I know that was a private conversation. How do you feel about making it public? And I said, I'm really not comfortable. Because at that point I was thinking, again, I was going to be Chief Justice. I really didn't know what was going on. And I didn't want to discuss it. I didn't think it was -- again, it is a private matter.

However, and she then said, well, if -- when you're willing to talk about it, would you share your story and your journey with me? And I did that eventually, and that led to just an amazing story in the *Palm Beach Post*, which is still available online. I kept a journal. They took pictures during chemotherapy because I had to go through that. And that article, I think, appeared probably in October of 2003. So this -- you know, everything began in April and it was still going on several months later.

So what happened, though, is -- our public information officer got a call from a reporter. Again, I guess nothing stays completely secret, and they said, we hear that Justice Pariente was diagnosed with breast cancer.

At that point, I felt it was -- I had to talk about it, and I wanted to make sure that everyone knew this wasn't like I was about to die the next month. So we did share it. And

once they heard it was breast cancer and it was treatable, the mainstream press sort of lost interest in it. So the story became more of a personal one as opposed one that, oh, my goodness, what's gonna happen?

And another thing about the outpouring, it was 2003. And I have letters from people -- everyone from Ms. Bush, Governor Bush's wife, to Johnnie Byrd, who was the -- he was in the legislature; Jim King, who unfortunately subsequently passed away, people -- Toni Jennings from Orlando -- just reaching out and sending letters of support.

And what I would say to anyone listening to this, if you know someone who's been diagnosed, you know, what do you do? Don't avoid talking to them. And if you don't feel comfortable talking to them and just saying I'm here for you, send them a note. If you don't know what to say, just say, I heard you're going through this. I just want you to know I care. Because that meant so much to me. And that's what I would tell -- for your friends to do that. Don't just go -- avoid the topic.

And, again --

>> JUDGE LAUTEN: That's interesting. My best friend's wife has just gone through this journey, the lumpectomy and eventually the mastectomy. And it is -- you're not quite sure how to talk to someone about it.

>> JUDGE PARIENTE: Right.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Do you bring it up, not bring it up?

Do you wait for them to bring it up?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** But a short note --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right. That's great.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- would be a great way to do it.

No one -- I carry that philosophy to other people that I hear that have cancer. You know, if you hesitate -- when someone's going through an illness, you hesitate, you don't know what to say, so you say nothing, no. It's better, drop that note. And then you sort of see from there.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Once you made the decision to sort of publicly discuss this, I know that there is a -- now sort of famous picture of you, because during the chemotherapy process, you lost your hair and whether to let the public see you without your hair or with hair or with wearing a wig.

Why don't you tell us a little bit about that decision.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Probably if I look back on my life and, you know, being in the court for all these years and being involved with so many significant decisions, *Bush v. Gore*, which now people are referencing again, I would have to say that going on the bench without a wig made more of an impact on more women and people around this state and even around the country. And it was not done for -- to make a public show.

But here's what happened. No matter who you are, if you

go through a certain kind of chemotherapy, you're gonna lose your hair.

And so -- and even though I kept -- I kept on thinking, oh, I'm gonna -- because I'm eating healthy, I'm doing all these other things. I was doing yoga because I heard that was very good for, you know, if you're going through breast cancer. I had acupuncture, which many times insurance will pay for that. That reduces nausea as you're going through the treatment, at least it did, it was covered back then.

And, yet, I remember when my hair started falling out. And so your first -- it is a -- it gets -- for guys, it's a different experience.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** It's a slower process. The listeners can't see it, but I have male pattern baldness.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** But when you feel that coming out and you're going, oh, my goodness, it's really happening to me. And then there is this image that you have of yourself. I -- of almost being like a concentration camp victim.

And so -- and then the other thing is when people see someone who's bald, they assume, oh, they're going through chemotherapy. They must be dying. And when I tell them, no, no, you're going through chemotherapy, I was going through to make sure I was going to survive --

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- and not stick my head in the

stand.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** So it was, don't feel sorry for me because I lost my hair. So that was my first reaction.

And then, though, I got the most beautiful wig that I could possibly get. It was actually -- my -- it was perfect. And that was my intent was to wear that wig. Over the summer, no. But, you know, as I got back to, you know, the court was in session.

And I think that the first oral argument, I had the wig. I have to look back at those pictures. And it was so uncomfortable for me.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Interesting.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** It felt -- it was hot. And it was just -- it was like not me. And then I kept on worrying. I was on the bench that what if, like, it started shifting and it would fall off -- you know, I just had that, so it was distracting.

And then there was a point I was attending something across -- at the Capitol that Governor Bush was speaking at, and it was about families staying together and having meals together, which I'm a big proponent of.

And I'm standing there and, again, it's Tallahassee, it's September. And it was so hot. And I'm sweating, and this wig's on. And I'm just -- I come back, and I asked --

first I asked another judge who's actually on the Supreme Court of Canada what she did. And I said I was thinking of going without a wig and what did she think? And she said it's just your, you know -- it's your personal -- obviously, your personal preference. But fine.

She then -- so I then asked my colleagues, what would you think if I went on the bench without a wig? They weren't gonna say, no, you can't do it.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** I now -- again, I look at the pictures and I'm going, God, I was in this other reality where really I wanted to look like that? Of course, after when I did it, people would say, oh, you have such a cute -- you have such a cute head --

(Laughter.)

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** -- I wouldn't do it. My head doesn't look so cute.

So it was an oral argument in October, and came on the bench without a wig, and I remember that oral argument. And one of the lawyers that was arguing it -- no one missed a beat, you know? And I continued to ask questions.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And then that afternoon, the Bar president actually -- it was -- we had an investiture, and the Bar president made a comment about it, about the courage

to do that.

As I said, that started this -- then I continued not to wear a wig. That didn't mean -- I mean, chemotherapy is not a walk in the park.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Every membrane is thinned, not just your hair. You know, your -- the -- your esophagus and your mouth. So there's a lot of other parts to chemotherapy. But it was -- I was able to keep up what I needed to do, and then chemotherapy ended in November of that year, 2003.

We're now -- I'm 13 years post. I'm doing fine. I am now down to just seeing the oncologist once a year. But breast cancer is not like a five-year window. They do say that you really almost have to look at 15 years to make sure nothing comes back. So I am almost there. I guess when I retire, it will be there.

But I don't -- I don't live my life thinking, is it gonna come back? What breast cancer also did for me -- and I think it will have done for many other women and men that go through any kind of cancer -- is you end up, at least at the time, appreciating every day.

I remember coming back to my house -- because I'd have chemotherapy sometimes in Tallahassee where the Court sits, sometimes in West Palm Beach where my home is. I've been commuting back and forth all this time -- and going outside

and just listening to the birds and looking up at the sky and just being grateful for that day.

And I then knew things were getting back to normal when the daily stresses started coming and things would bother me like they did before.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** I'd go, oh, goodness. I'm over this. But I'd try to keep that feeling of what the importance is of every day in our lives and every moment. So I think it made me a stronger person. And I was able to -- you know, I had short hair when I became Chief Justice, but I had hair back.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And it was -- actually one other thing about not having hair. As a woman, what a great thing in the morning not to have to blow dry your hair and to take a swim. And so there were a lot of freeing things about not having hair.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Well, I can appreciate that.

(Laughter.)

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Looking back on this journey, this experience, would you do anything differently having gone through it?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Well, from the beginning, again, I would be much more attune to having the mammograms, you know,

double-read because who knows?

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** So you'd recommend that for women?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** I would. I would. And I think a lot of places do that.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Recommend that?

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And so I think that the technology is probably -- you know, again, I have not had a mammogram for 13 years, but the technology is improved, and there's ultrasounds.

And so, once again, the vigilance of the early detection. I don't know that I would do anything differently. I feel like I made good decisions. As I said, the surgery I had was the deep flap was a very long surgery. And I -- it was -- but my husband, you know, had to wait for -- it was over ten hours. So he might have said, well, that wasn't -- why didn't you do what most people do? But I'm glad I did that surgery.

And so, no, I think that I approached it in a way that I -- I don't have regrets. And that's -- no. I think I -- I haven't thought about what I'd do differently. But right now, I feel like the choices I made were appropriate.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Justice Pariente, there's so much in your entire legal career that we could talk about. The fact that you agreed to discuss this aspect of your life with us, I think, is another indication of your courage. And I'm so

grateful to you for discussing this with us. And the hope is that any listeners out there will learn from this conversation, take steps that will help them prevent cancer or detect it early. And certainly for any individuals experiencing it will be survivors who will learn from this.

And so I want to thank you so much not for just what you do as a Supreme Court justice, which is an enormous task and you serve the citizens in the state of Florida in that role, but for sharing this personal story with us.

Thank you so much.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Thank you. I have a last funny story.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Yes.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** We have -- Halloween's the last day of October, is Monday.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Right.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** And I do remember Halloween in 2003, and I ended up having a little party at my house in Tallahassee, and I told everybody to wear a wig. And so I was -- I had my husband wearing a purple wig and I had an orange wig. And it was a wonderful celebration.

So, again, anyone that is going through breast cancer right now, you know, try to turn it to, you know, what kind of funny wig can you wear? And be positive. And be aware and that is what the importance of this month is. Proudly

wear your pink and let's beat this disease.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Great. Thank you so much. We'll end on that note. I appreciate your presence. Thank you.

>> **JUDGE PARIENTE:** Thank you.

>> **JUDGE LAUTEN:** Thank you very much.

>> Thank you for 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.

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(Music.)