

OPEN NINTH:
CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM
SURVIVOR: OVERCOMING OBSTACLES
EPISODE 84
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HOSTED BY: DONALD A. MYERS, JR.

(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 Don Myers.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Hello, and welcome to Open Ninth. I’m here today with Aurora McCreary. Aurora is a native Floridian who grew up on the beaches of the Panhandle. She earned her bachelor’s degree at UCF and attended Tulane Law School in New Orleans.

Aurora is a Family Law attorney with Weiss, Grunor, Barclay & Barnett. And when she’s not in the courtroom, she’s pursuing adventures from rock climbing to triathlons to Ironmans to her latest adventure, a contestant on *Survivor: Edge of Extinction*.

Welcome to the show, Aurora.

AURORA MCCREARY: Good morning.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Thanks for being here. We have so much to talk about. So what I’d like to ask you to do is just begin by telling us a little bit how you got onto the show.

AURORA MCCREARY: So I have been a *Survivor* fan since the very beginning. I watched it with my family growing up, kind of dwindled off in college as we all do, and then went right back into it after college.

I’ve always wanted to be on the show. I’ve looked at it as one of the most challenging things, whether it just be the social aspect or the mental warfare. And I had just gotten to a place in life where I felt like professionally I could go and possibly be on TV and not humiliate myself. And so I took a chance and I put in an application, and I almost immediately got on and ended up in Fiji a few months later.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's just incredible. So for those of our listeners who haven't watched *Survivor*, which I can't imagine that there's anybody out there who hasn't seen it but we may have some who don't, tell us a little bit about how the game is played.

AURORA MCCREARY: So *Survivor* is about taking strangers, usually 18 to 20 of them, and putting them on a very remote island in a competition to see who will win out in the end. Usually you're put onto tribes, and so you're working as a tribe in the beginning to get further, whether that be winning tribe rewards or tribe immunities. If you don't end up winning that, you go and vote. And so it's constantly about trying to get further in the game and be strategic and strong while also knowing that the people you are with every day are the ones that are voting you out. And then it merges into a large group game to win -- then each episode, each week, something else is happening and the chances of getting evicted out are much higher.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So how long is the total game?

AURORA MCCREARY: The total game is 39 days that you could be on an island.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: All right. And you made it how far?

AURORA MCCREARY: I made it to day 35.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Oh.

AURORA MCCREARY: I know. I am surprised I made it that far, so I'm very happy and blessed with the experience.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, that's awesome. So top six, right?

AURORA MCCREARY: It would have been top six but for the fact that we had a twist where someone came back in. So as much as I was there at the final six, when someone came back in they took my spot and pushed me to seven. But I call it final six.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: I'm good with that. Did you have a strategy going into the game?

AURORA MCCREARY: Going into the game, I -- not so much a strategy as I knew my weaknesses and I wanted to concentrate on attempting to push those far enough out that they wouldn't become a problem. And so I knew that I was going to be physical. I wanted to try and be social immediately with everyone and find more of like the underdogs. Unfortunately, with all the twists and the turns, I immediately found myself on the outs so I had to change my strategy and try and figure out how to use the situation I was in and that I found myself in to an advantage.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you were a part of the -- is the Kama Tribe or Kamma [phonetic] Tribe?

AURORA MCCREARY: Kama Tribe.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. And how many people in the tribe?

AURORA MCCREARY: So there were eight people on the tribe. And -- I believe there was eight people. It's all blurring now. There are eight people, but two of them were returning players. And so there was already a division within our tribe day one of how were we going to interact with returning players, especially since historically returning players have always made it to the end. And so when you have a group of fans who know these facts, it changes the dynamics pretty quickly.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So that's got to be an interesting dynamic where you have returning players who have typically been successful to make it to the end. And there's got to be some desire to want to partner up with them knowing, however, that they have the advantage of having played before and that many people want them gone.

AURORA MCCREARY: Yeah. It's very challenging, because you do have that. They can offer you something. They have that experience. At the other part, they are much more comfortable than you are. You're still looking at them as a fan. I mean, I remember the first time I met Joe, he's 6 feet tall, staring in my eyes, and I'm like, I was a fan of yours. Like, it takes a while to remember we're on the same playing level.

But it's not always about how you perceive someone, whether they can be advantageous to your game play or can be a threat. It's about how the group as a whole does it. And I think that's something that I forgot is that even though I looked at both returning players as a shield and someone who would be targeted prior to anyone coming to me, I forgot to look at how the rest of my tribe was looking at them.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So tell me, what did you perceive to be your biggest strength going into the game?

AURORA MCCREARY: My biggest strength probably would be my physical strength. I am proud to say that I would consider myself an athlete. I have worked probably over the last ten years to become physically fit and adaptive in a large variety of sports, and so I knew that I could be someone who could come in and possibly take down one of the big guys that they were worried about would get to the end, that I could stand there and outlast -- that I would -- if you ever put my back up against a wall, I will beat you. If I have to die first, I will die first, but I will beat you.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Biggest weakness?

AURORA MCCREARY: Social; definitely social. I am not good at small-talk. I am not good at continuously playing a conversation, redoing it, trying to figure something in common. Usually, if I'm comfortable, I'm comfortable. And if I'm not, I'll just go and do

something else. And in *Survivor*, you can't do that. You are constantly sitting with the same people. You have to make everyone feel comfortable. You have to build the relationships beyond a five-minute who are you, what is your life. And I found that difficult.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you've been back for how long now since the experience?

AURORA MCCREARY: I have been back for a year and a month, so --

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And in that year and a month, have you given thought to the plays and moves that you made during the game?

AURORA MCCREARY: Every single day. It's not as though it's my only life and it's not that it's the only thing I think about but, yeah, I have probably had so many conversations by myself, walking around my house, what I could have said, what if I would have talked to this person -- literally playing it out, out loud. But it's definitely something you think about. It's probably going to be with me for the rest of my life. But it's also something that continuously is pushing me, challenging me. If I run into a situation where I have to network or I have to meet new people, I feel as though I'm much more open these days than I was before when I used to just say, this isn't me, let me just walk out.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So in all of that reflection on the game-play, is there one decision that you would look back and say, I wish I had done that differently?

AURORA MCCREARY: That's hard. Because I can say I would have -- I could have made this move which possibly could have led to something differently. But each time you voted someone out, you had to come back and fix something that you may have hurt, whether it be a relationship or that you told a lie; you may now have to see if the person you thought you could trust in -- I just think there's too many ifs.

I don't regret anything. I look at it as more of I'm very proud of how far I went, I'm very proud of how much I adapted. And I want to know how those lessons I learned transform into my real life. I don't want to go out of a positive situation with a negative. I'd rather go out with a positive.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Absolutely. So do you think that your time as a contestant on *Survivor* has impacted you as a lawyer?

AURORA MCCREARY: I definitely do think that *Survivor* has helped me become a better lawyer. I don't think that they are usually in the traditional ways. I think that it has made me a lot more open. As I said, a lot more -- not just open. I guess it's a lot more -- having a lot more belief in myself that I can communicate with people, that I can go out and just join something that just because I'm not comfortable doesn't mean I can't go and join different groups of the Bar and meet different people. I also think that it has taught me a lot of patience. And that, you know, as much we all -- lawyers love to argue and we love to win, it's not about winning. It's about how did you make your argument, how did you play your game, and are you proud when you leave.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So what do you think is your biggest takeaway from being on the show?

AURORA MCCREARY: I think my biggest takeaway is that we all can sit down and write what our faults are. We can sit down and write what things that we're afraid of, but it's -- unless we actually push towards enough -- unless we challenge ourself [sic], we never know if that's our edge. We never know if we can actually go beyond, if we can do more. That the only way to figure that out is to constantly be pushing your boundaries, to be figuring out is this still

something I'm not that good at, is this still something that scares me, or is it something in which I am actually, completely comfortable with now.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So in an experience like this, there have to be just tremendous stresses on your body but also on your mind. How did you manage that while you were on the island?

AURORA MCCREARY: I don't know if I did, honestly. Yeah, mentally, it's a hard game. You can go in and say, I'm a tough individual, I'm not really reactive when it comes to certain things. There is no feeling like there is in *Survivor* where you are with complete strangers and most of the time you know that they're not -- they're against you. Even if you have allies, if you have things -- there are other people who want to get you out. They're constantly having to talk to convince people to keep you. You're constantly having to forgive people overnight and not take things personally and not think that it's going to happen again.

You -- there's a great avenue in *Survivor*, it's called the confessionals, it's when you're talking to the camera, when you're talking to a producer. And those you start to rely on, almost like therapy daily. You need someone to be able to go out and vent to, to explain exactly how you feel so that you can come back to the situation and keep a straight face, keep it together and not react. And sometimes you don't; sometimes you end up crying on TV.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And those confessionals, now those are not shown to your peers on the island, your other competitors, until after the show, right?

AURORA MCCREARY: Yes. It is only something that is shown when it airs. We don't know what part of it's going to air. There's a lot of stories you never see. But it is probably the most honest you're ever going to be in the game is when no one's watching.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: And so after the episodes have been filmed, you come home and you have a chance to watch the show. Any of those confessionals surprise you from any of your fellow contestants?

AURORA MCCREARY: I think sometimes what the confessionals allow us to see is that there's always a person behind each character. We all start fitting into certain roles. We start having relationships with people while not having relationships with others. When you see the confessionals, you see so much more of the humor, you see so much of the more human connection.

I don't think there -- I never was going to take offense to anything on the show because, again, you're seeing such a small snippet of what it is let alone what this individual is. I think I saw in confessionals that everyone else was having just as a hard enough time as I was. Whereas though when you're on it, you're thinking you're the only one crying to the confessional; I mean, daily crying to these producers. They are the most amazing people. They truly take care of us and while also making sure that they're not just going to edit this into a way which you're a completely different individual and a character, only seeing a side of you. I think that's also very important is that the confessionals don't get manipulated.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you play the game, and obviously there's got to be a tremendous feeling of personal success and just good positive feelings about going as far as you did or even possibly winning. But there is a financial prize at the end as well, is that right?

AURORA MCCREARY: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: How much?

AURORA MCCREARY: So the winner gets a million dollars. And then depending on how -- where you come out final-wise, you also get a certain fee. And then I was blessed -- there

used to be a Fan Favorite or America's Favorite, and now it's kind of just become the Sia Award, because she is a singer and an artist and she is a huge fan, and so she gives money to usually people that are her favorite or people that she believes have had certain things in their life, and so she ended up giving me money as well. So that was really nice.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's pretty cool. And that happened live during the finale show, right?

AURORA MCCREARY: Yeah. Well, mine didn't, thankfully, because I would have started crying.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay.

AURORA MCCREARY: I know myself. But I actually got the opportunity to meet her downstairs. She gave Rick Devens, who everyone knows and was such an amazing player and just fell short -- and she gave him a life-changing award, and so that's been really great. And just to show that, like, you know, it's not just about who won. It's also about who played it with their heart.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Right. And where you came from playing it.

AURORA MCCREARY: Yeah.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. So I want to take a turn, but we're going to come back to *Survivor* in a minute.

Because you recently spoke at the Orange County Bar Association's lunch meeting, and you shared with us there some of your story and some of the lessons, I think, that you learned and that you're taking with you from that. And I was really grateful for that, grateful to hear you speak and to open up in the way that you did.

But we asked the membership of the Orange County Bar that was in attendance to write down some questions that they had that didn't get asked or that they didn't feel like they could ask in that setting. So we're going to come back and we're going to go to those what we call crowd-source questions.

AURORA MCCREARY: Okay.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: But before we do that, let's just learn a little bit more about you. You grew up in Pensacola. And as you told the story at the Bar luncheon, you were a foster child at some point. You left your birth parents and were in the foster system. How long did you live in that system?

AURORA MCCREARY: So it's -- I'll go a little backwards even with that. I have three biological brothers. We all have different fathers but the same mother. And we were taken away from our mother for being a neglectful, abusive mother.

We -- two of us, our fathers did not know our identities and our mother would not tell who they were, so our -- we -- both of us went to the foster care system. Two other of the brothers, their fathers know their identity, and so they took them and they took legal custody over them.

So I was in the foster care system from age one and then initially was adopted around eight years old. But then there was an appeal and so it wasn't until I was about almost ten that we were adopted, both my brother and myself. So seven to ten years.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. And so you had an adoption family, a family that chose you, a family that wanted you to be a part of their lives, for about eight years, I guess, or so when you were at home with them.

AURORA MCCREARY: So I came into this family when I was about five. Prior to that my brother and I generally -- except for one time -- were together whether it be in a shelter, whether it be in a foster family. We were often in foster families that weren't looking to adopt. My brother was older. He is six years older than me, so he was already a boy with a personality who also is taking care of a little girl. It wasn't always the easiest with parents, and so we often were with families who weren't quite looking to adopt but wanting to keep families together.

And that's how we ended up into this family. My parents got Foster Parents of the Year in Florida for one year. They often took kids -- again, large families, three to four kids at a time. They had already adopted a boy and weren't looking to adopt another, but then they met us, as it says.

And so it was interesting. My mother ended up passing a few years ago, but I was able to find that she had journals and -- surprise me -- but two of the journals were from the time of us being in foster care and being adopted. So it was very interesting to see it from her side and why she chose us and what types of emotions you have as a parent going through a legal system where it is a contested adoption.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: How -- and that just must have been such an incredible experience to have the benefit of those journals to gain some insight into what she was thinking.

AURORA MCCREARY: It definitely was. I mean, it opened my eyes. I didn't even know about the appeal until I read this. I -- my parents and my brother did everything they could to keep me out of the system. I mean, obviously, we had appointments, we had court dates, but I had the most normal life I could ever think of and it's normal for me. And so learning another side was great.

But I will say, as parents, if you're going to write journals, write them in the good times and bad times of your kids, not just the bad times where they're acting up because they may come to read them.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's great insight. As an adoptive father, I'll remember that.

So you're very close with your brother, obviously.

AURORA MCCREARY: I am.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah. And do you remain close today?

AURORA MCCREARY: We're close. We're not the type of family that talk every day, that have -- we don't really do holidays or things like that. *Survivor* really has brought us closer, to make an effort to talk to each other. When we see each other, when we visit, it's right back like we lived with each other. We laugh; we have the same sense of humor. But this is making us make that step further where it's not that just, hey, let's catch up. It is more of, hey, tell me how's that job going; I know you applied. Like more continuous real connections.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Awesome. So why did you choose the law?

AURORA MCCREARY: I love being a lawyer. My parents always said I was going to be a lawyer. They said -- my mom said, what don't you get about the word no, when I was younger. And I said, there's a hole in the middle of the O, it's a loophole. And she said from that day forward she knew I was going to be a lawyer.

I love the excitement of being given the exact same sort of facts, you're on level playing field, here's your facts, who can make the argument better. I love doing that. I -- it's not always about winning. It's about just seeing if you can convince someone else of your argument, and I -- that's why I litigate, I think.

I started off -- I actually -- my first trial that I was second chair, I had in front of you in doing premises liability personal injury. And I enjoyed watching it, I enjoyed seeing it, but I never really got into the area of law. And so I randomly got into Family and realized I love it. And I love the connections, I love what I can -- that -- rather than other areas of law where you're trying to get your client better off than they were, I know, no matter what, by the end of the day I'm going to get my client to somewhere better than they were before, even if it's not what they thought it was. Even if they're not getting 100 percent of what they would want in a divorce or something, they're going to be leaving with the tools and the knowledge of how to be a better parent, how to make sure that you're in control. And I love that.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Are there -- I mean, you're in an area of the law that is emotional, sometimes volatile. Are there cases that you've had that have stuck with you; cases that you'll say, I'll always remember that?

AURORA MCCREARY: I mean, it's hard because I don't know if yet I've forgotten most of my cases. I think with five years of working in it I remember most of my cases. I think -- there was one case where -- especially when the judge was reading her verdict, I kind of teared up, which I was so surprised because I'm not an emotional person, but I do cry at the randomist [phonetic] times. That was hard because I knew that I felt as though my client was not -- it's not receiving the short end of the stick, but my client was personally going to be hurt and that the family would be hurt.

But I also have made a rule in my practice right now that I will not do any dependency, and that's just because it's too close of a system for me. I don't mind working with guardian ad litem, I don't mind working with things -- but I can't go and actually, like, get attached to the children or I will just start being a bawling mess, so --

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: How about goals for yourself; career goals, at this point?

AURORA MCCREARY: That's hard. I feel like that's a question that's really been hitting me lately and been asked of me. After five years of practicing, you know, a lot of people ask you, are you going for partner, are you going to try and open up your own firm, are you going to go look to do something else. And I don't know yet. I really don't.

I love litigating. I love being a lawyer. I really can't imagine doing another type of profession. I could see myself mediating or teaching. But I also know that I am very strong in my belief of having a life outside of being a lawyer. And I have never wanted to be the person that will be at work from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. I love being able just to get up and leave at 4:00 if I want to go to the gym, or come in at 10:00 if I've got something to do with an organization.

So I want to find the balance of how do I get both of those. And I don't know that yet, but I'm still learning. I have a lot to learn. And I think that right now my goal is more on meeting people and building relationships to learn everyone else's experience to see how I will mold my own.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, let's come back around, then, for just a minute in terms of experience to the *Survivor* show. Okay. And let's talk about some of these other questions that have been asked.

So tell us first about your first few days on the island, your first sort of, wow, here I am.

AURORA MCCREARY: Well, the first two days were great. It was amazing. It still didn't feel real. You're on an island, you're like, oh -- like, everyone's in a good mood. We've got Joe making a shelter, you're sleeping in the dirt but it's still okay. It's just exciting because you know that you're playing a game, but it's also not yet comfortable enough for it to feel real.

It is weird, you notice the cameras around you, you notice, okay, I've got to go, like, talk to the producer now. It's not yet comfortable.

Day three it started raining. Day three it hit me, that was my pushing point. I hate being cold. I am a true Southerner, so being rained on is an experience you can never forget. That's when it started to feel real. That's when you realize no one is going to come and help you out, that you signed up for this and you're in it for the long haul. So that's -- those were tough, but it was still exciting.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Does the competition begin the minute you arrive at the island?

AURORA MCCREARY: No, the competition starts before. So you end up going over to Fiji where ours was located about a week before. They -- *Survivor* and CBS have done this enough to know that there are certain things to protect the individuals, and so they have put in certain rules or routines to help them. And one of them is to fly them out early. We see each other but we cannot talk to each other, but we are learning to wake up and go to bed when the sun rises and the sun sets. You are learning to sleep outside with all the noise and the craziness. And I think those are very good things. You aren't given caffeine. You aren't given these things. Your body is ready to be protected. But you see each other. So you're not supposed to talk, but you see your competitors. You see who you're in the game with. You don't know who's on your team, but you're already sizing people up. You're giving people nicknames, you're trying to see how they handle themselves if someone's taking too long in the line to get food. No, the game starts before.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Are there things that you are not permitted to talk about by virtue of the agreement you have with CBS and *Survivor*?

AURORA MCCREARY: There are. We have a non-disclosure agreement. It's interesting that I don't think anyone really understands what it is we can't talk about. Obviously, prior to the finale, we can't talk about anything. But if you listen to other podcasts, if you read other things that past Survivors have said, nothing any of us are saying is hidden. It's not open generally to the everyday people, because they're not going to go and search for these things.

I think *Survivor* doesn't want you to know more about the actual production and the staff and how -- interaction and stuff like that, because the more you talk about it, the more you remember, oh, these people aren't on a deserted island by themselves; there are these people around.

But again, there's nothing -- it's -- nothing's hidden. There's no -- we can't -- we're not lying to you that we really are starving. We're not lying to you that we really are having fights out in the open with people, that these competitions last for hours, that we don't have a secret stash of food. There's just nothing -- lies. So I don't know what the NDA is for.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. You've been practicing here in Orange County and Osceola County for how long?

AURORA MCCREARY: A little over five years.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. So you've had exposure to some of our judges, maybe not all of them.

AURORA MCCREARY: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Of all of the judges that you've appeared in front of, which one is -- would do the best on *Survivor*, and why?

AURORA MCCREARY: And I have to do that in front of a judge? Can I -- I'll give two. I'm going to give a male and a female for different reasons.

And, again, sorry if you haven't -- I haven't practiced in front of you.

I would say female would be Judge Higbee. I believe that she could be social enough while also kind of sliding under the radar and pushing -- she would push people out in front of her.

And I would tie you and Judge Traver, because I think both of you are very much alike where you're very intelligent, you look for specific things but you don't have to be the character out in front, you don't have to have control. I think there are a lot of other judges who have a lot more character in the courtroom, as I see it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Fascinating. So what was the first thing you ate when you were off the show?

AURORA MCCREARY: So immediately upon getting off the show we get onto what is called Ponderosa, which is where we're going to live for the next few days and then vote. And I had a chocolate chip cookie, an Oreo with peanut butter in the middle, and a handful of gummies. And I just ate it all at once and then just continue -- I haven't stopped eating. Today I had a carrot cake Oreo. Why? I don't know, I can't stop.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: What food did you crave the most when you were finally able to eat?

AURORA MCCREARY: I really wanted a salad. I really wanted grilled chicken. You just want to taste natural food. I did have one reward which was Chinese food, and I thought it was horrible because it was so heavy, it was so thick. It didn't leave you feeling better. And I saw everything else -- I just wanted something with flavor. And I was a little too nervous to have spices, again, as well, because you don't know how your stomach's going to react because you just had rice. And, yes, I've had rice since. And I enjoy rice.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: At some point you were voted off the island and you were brought to Extinction Island. We know that that had to have been an incredibly difficult place. At least two contestants who were sent there said, no, thank you, we'll just leave the show. So tell us a little bit about Extinction Island.

AURORA MCCREARY: So I can tell you at my experience, mine was 12 hours. So it wasn't as intense of [sic] other people's. I will say that there was a hazing when you get onto it. There is one fire, and it's pretty small. They don't have extra wood or all of this stuff to be able to make multiple or larger -- so it's almost as though the fire is the middle, the sun, and everyone is laying outside of it like its rays.

When it's your first night, they basically box you out and don't allow you to come near the fire. And being such a tiny, open island that does not have shrubbery, that doesn't have all these trees blocking the wind, you're in the Fijian winter. It is cold. And I may have fallen out of my boat trying to get to the island, and so I was wet, I was cold. It wasn't -- it was probably one of my hardest nights. It wasn't inviting. No one really talked to you. They wanted your story and then then ignored you. But I, thankfully, the next day went and competed.

Watching everyone else -- I think the hardest part is you came to *Survivor* to play a game and you came to go do the physical thing, go strategize, go talk. And what Extinction was, was sitting, was doing nothing. You could talk to people, but again, what -- are you going to have the same conversation? And then you can -- you have to be nice because possibly they may give you information and help you in the game, but you don't want to be too nice because they're also still your enemy. And you don't have to make alliances with them. Making an alliance doesn't help you get there, in physical competition.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That kind of brings up an interesting issue from a watcher's perspective. You -- I mean, I think it's fair to say you have to lie at some point, right?

AURORA MCCREARY: Yes.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. And yet you're lying to the very people who you were attempting to establish a relationship with, the people that you want to trust you more than anybody else at that moment. How does that dynamic feel for you and how does that work on the island?

AURORA MCCREARY: I don't think there's any way to describe how mental and emotion work on *Survivor*. It changes every day. You have to figure out who you are, an individual, and how you're going to adapt to it.

For me, the lying and cheating was okay. And it was okay after my initial shock from it. I'm, again, not someone who easily makes quick relationships and deep relationships. And so I tried really hard, and after first being blindsided, I -- it hit me. I cried. I was so upset that everyone not only had lied to me but I had seen that other people who were supposed to be on the other side knew about things, and so I felt betrayed.

But it only took me a few hours to realize I've watched this for 20 years, like, this is what happens; why am I sitting here and acting like I'm the only person who's done this. And so I just went right back into the game. But not everyone can do that. A lot of people -- it -- they're not used to being lied to. They're used to having people to hold on to. I don't have the same type of family structure, things like that, where I have always someone to depend on who I can call and just say, oh, my gosh, like, just tell me something nice. So it's easier for me to just be like, okay, you were useful, thanks, next.

But to explain it, to predict it, you can't. You're going to cry. Then you're going to go and you're going to lie. Tribal Council is the hardest because you're not -- Tribal Council isn't acting. It is a lesson in acting. Our season -- every single Tribal Council, the person who was going home did not think they were going home. And so what is your life that evening? Are you their best friend? Are you their enemy? But are you actually the opposite?

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Having experienced what you experienced, if you were invited back to play --

AURORA MCCREARY: Absolutely. Right away. No question. Don't even need to finish the answer. I would leave -- I'd hope to leave tomorrow to be able to call certain clients. But, no, I'd do it again in one second.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. Something that we as watchers might be surprised to learn. Is there something about the show that we don't know that we really would be surprised to learn about?

AURORA MCCREARY: I think probably one of the most surprising things is how quick the competitions go. They -- there's a lot of hurry up and wait in *Survivor*. You've got to get to where -- you have to travel by boat. That's a 45-minute boat ride where, again, you can't talk, you can't do anything. Whatever you see on TV, that's when we're talking. If -- there's no hidden conversations.

So it's a lot of go, boat ride, get miked up, sit down and wait. The competition -- it's huge. They're the size of football fields. And then it's over in less than three minutes. And then you go back to just, oh, wait, I get to sit around.

I'd probably also say the food. You really don't eat on this show. Like at the beginning I would say if you take a coffee mug, you have that in the morning. And not like California huge

size of your face coffee mugs. Regular mom and pop coffee mugs. Morning and night you get a full coffee mug. Once -- the time you get about middle of the game, you have half a coffee mug in the morning and half a coffee mug at night. And that's it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Wow.

AURORA MCCREARY: You just sit there hungry, all day long. And all they talk about is food.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So in that same vein, any little-known thing about yourself that others would be surprised to learn?

AURORA MCCREARY: Something about me -- I never thought I was that good of a swimmer. I just thought, I grew up in Florida. But supposedly I'm, like, a really good swimmer, I guess, to other people. I just thought everyone swam. And I think going on the show that surprised me. But I don't know.

I mean, again, I tried to be very open in this show. I went into it thinking -- I was very nervous about how lawyers in my profession and my judges would perceive me. I've been absolutely floored by how that has been received. But I also was nervous of was I going to be too guarded, was I going to actually be truthful, was I going to get things out of this that I thought I -- would be able to open up different areas of how I was feeling, how I deal with things, what are my weaknesses, or was I just going to play it safe. And I said I didn't want to play it safe. And so I don't know if -- I think more people learned more about me. I don't think most people -- I think most people know I was adopted and some sort, but I don't think most people knew my history.

And so I don't know what else there is about me. I have green eyes.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you said you didn't know how this would be perceived by your fellow lawyers and judges and folks who watched. And I -- you know, personally I walk away and have so many incredible insights into who you are as a person that make you who you are as a lawyer. But we're all incredibly impressed with your competitiveness.

AURORA MCCREARY: Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So who inspired that competitiveness in you?

AURORA MCCREARY: I don't know. I think it comes from -- I mean, definitely a part of it does come from being in adoption care system. I think that when you're constantly fighting, you have to prove you want to be the best, it's something like -- you have to -- there's a game kids in the system play where it's -- you try to learn about your family before you go there because you want to figure out how to convince them to keep you.

And then I'm also the youngest. I'm the youngest of my biological family of three boys, and I have my adopted additional brother. I'm the youngest, only girl. I was never going to sit down. I had to beat them. My brothers tried every wrestling move on me on the trampoline. I just grew up not wanting -- I want to be the best, I really do. I want to be the best version of me. I don't have to be the best out of everyone, but I never want to say I didn't try hard enough because then you can only blame yourself.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you're clearly not done competing. What's next for you?

AURORA MCCREARY: No. Next for me, I'd say physically, I guess, competition, I'm doing the New York Marathon supposedly. I entered the lottery and randomly got it, so I kind of feel like I have to.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Congratulations.

AURORA MCCREARY: I don't really know. I want to -- I try and go on trips. I just took a trip to Europe and did that. But I think next year I want to do more of like an adventure race where you go -- you do the hiking, you do the climbing, you do whitewater rafting, but you're doing it while also directing yourself. And it's kind of like a maze and a puzzle you have to figure out. So I want to try that.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's incredible, just incredible. And so I also read that you're going to be speaking in September for the Osceola Guardian ad Litem Foundation, is that right?

AURORA MCCREARY: I am. They're doing their annual gala. And it's the first time I actually heard about it. Obviously as a Family Law attorney I know what a guardian ad litem is. I'm more familiar with Orange County where they are lawyers. I learned that Osceola is volunteers and that this foundation does a gala to which they raise money to strictly go towards the children. It's not towards the families, it's not towards the guardian ad litem, it is -- if a kid wants to play soccer but they can't afford it.

You know, I was very blessed even in -- before being adopted that this family that I was in, which was the majority of school, it was first grade on, if I wanted to play a sport I didn't have to go and see if I had enough funds in the adoption care system or my parents got enough money from them to be able to do it. But that happens a lot with kids.

And so I'm really excited to go and speak with them. This is probably also one where, like this, I talk more about my background and about why I have a personal connection to this organization. So I think that's really interesting and will open up a lot more people's eyes than just talking about competitions or starving or things like that.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: That's awesome. Well, Aurora, it has been such a pleasure to get to hear a little bit about your background, a lot about your *Survivor* experiences. There's no doubt I think in the next couple of years we're going to be able to have you back on the show after having successfully completed some additional challenge.

Thank you so much for being here.

AURORA MCCREARY: Thank you so much.

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