

OPEN NINTH:

CONVERSATIONS BEYOND THE COURTROOM

A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

THREAT ASSESSMENT, PREPARATION, AND PREVENTION

FEATURING JOHN MUFFLER

EPISODE 98

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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 Don Myers.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Hello and welcome to Open Ninth. Joining me today is a leading court security expert John Muffler. An accomplished threat assessment and law enforcement professional, John has over thirty years’ experience in high level work place safety and security. Most notably in his career he conducted risk assessment for high visibility foreign terrorism trials and developed capacity building initiatives related to the justice sector. John is a retired United States Marshal Service Chief Inspector and former administrator of the National Center for Judicial Security. Currently, he serves as the Principal of Aequitas Global Security and the Director for Mosaic Threat Assessment Systems for Gavin, de Becker and Associates. It’s great to have you here, John. Thanks for being with us.

MR. MUFFLER: Thank you, I appreciate the invitation.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Well, we’re looking forward to our conversation and let’s jump right in. Tell us a little bit about, and we’ve read obviously a little bit of your bio. Tell us a little bit about the work that you do.

MR. MUFFLER: Like you said, I retired from the U.S. Marshal Service where I, you know, went through the ranks and retired as a Chief Inspector of a national program that was based in our headquarters, and there I had outreach to state, local and global judicial communities where I would help assess and educate on threats, security issues. I retired a couple of years ago and I started my own LLC, Aequitas and then I began, soon after that became a senior advisor for Gavin, de Becker overseeing his Mosaic Threat Assessment Systems, so Gavin – Gavin’s company has been around for a few decades. He’s authored numerous books, the Gift of Fear being a primary one, Just Two Seconds, Protecting the Gift, on and on so I’m very fortunate to be tied with Gavin and helping on a daily basis more or less schools, work places, judicial communities understand the prevention and intervention piece of assessing threats.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: We live in a day and age where threats seem pervasive. I mean, you hear a lot about incidents across the country of violence against public figures, against judges, against all sorts of actors in our community. Has the problem gotten worse or is this just media picking up more?

MR. MUFFLER: I don't know, I mean, I hate to be, you know the alarmist. I think I'm more of a realist. It certainly seems like it has gotten worse. I think certainly the social media and the ability to broadcast your personal feelings, or your issues that gets multiplied through those different platforms so there certainly could be something to that, you know. But I would say more – my personal experience, you know, thirty some years in law enforcement and then being in the private sector, it has certainly seemed to have gotten worse. There's such things like copy cats and contagion that we talk about in threat assessment, or those folks who, you know, they're on a pathway to violence. Once they see it in the news media tend to act out, those folks who are farther down that pathway and more at risk with less inhibitors in place to stop them. And the research out there really signifies, and shows that too, that there is something to it, you know, once information is broadcast and, you know, broadcast being, you know, all these different platforms, not just, you know, ABC, CBS and NBC. Now, it's every kind of dimension so it's easy to get that information out there so there actually is a study that says there's like an eleven-day window when say an active shooter happens, that there's a likelihood of other incidents similar to it to happen.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Really? That's so interesting. I think the news cycle used to follow, it was always we all waited until the evening news to catch up on the last 24 hours of events. But now we have real time reporting and everything is just instantaneous so that would seem to bring that eleven-day window even perhaps a little tighter.

MR. MUFFLER: Right. And, you know, again with Twitter and the ability to just broadcast now, you don't have to wait, you know. I used to like to read the morning paper but it's sort of useless anymore. I still do it but, you know, you can get it instantly, you know, the Google feeds that I get on my phone seems to know exactly what I want to listen to which is kind of creepy.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: It is a little creepy.

MR. MUFFLER: But it's all there for the taking right away, so you don't have to wait the next day.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Right, I think we've all experienced that. I'm still a newspaper reader myself. Every morning I catch the local news. I like the local flavor and appreciate our local newspaper.

MR. MUFFLER: Agreed.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you – one of your involvements as you've talked about it is with the Gavin, de Becker group on the Mosaic Threat Assessment Systems. Tell us a little bit about Mosaic and what those systems are.

MR. MUFFLER: Oh, would love to. So Gavin, some years ago, created this threat assessment tool. It was more of a foundation in public figure. Gavin's business, he does a lot of celebrity protection, corporate figure protection, and as he started in his career looking at a way to help understand and maybe triage and prioritize the type of people who are attracted to threatening or sending benign communications to the people he was responsible for protecting. Again, going back some decades, that was primarily celebrities. So the program he created, Mosaic, helps to triage and understand sort of that pathway behavior that I talked about, where are these people along that pathway, are they at greater risk at the end of this assessment. After a series of a couple dozen questions, it helps the assessor which could be law enforcement, which could be a high school administrator, it could be someone suffering from domestic violence in that range, understand where this person who is at risk, where they may be on this – on this scale. So it helps law enforcement in particular. It helps, coming from that background, understand what the risk may be coming from this particular person through their communications, right. The Mosaic is designed specifically and individually for domestic violence, public figure, work place, K through 12, university and judicial. At the Marshal Service, when I was there, we used Mosaic to help us assess the judicial threats that we were receiving. With the 2,200 federal judges, we'd receive, and I'm going to ballpark the average, about 1,000 per year. When I say threats, and I mean threats, inappropriate communications. There's the direct threats and then there's the ones that are more veiled or conditional, or benign, to look at that to help us evaluate what we're looking at.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So you described several different tools that are a part of that Mosaic assessment. Are there different tools then you're saying for each of those different populations that are targeted to help assess potential threat figures involved in those systems?

MR. MUFFLER: More or less. They're individually – the academic research that goes into each of those programs is based on individual research. For example, the judicial mosaic is primarily based on Calhoun's – Ted Calhoun is a Ph.D., formerly worked for the Marshal Service, on his research Hunters and Howlers, and so most of that research that supports Mosaic judicial comes from that particular research.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. What is the difference? I mean, why are threats assessed differently for public figures, for celebrities, at K through 12 schools, or judges? What is it that –

MR. MUFFLER: Great question. So judicial threats are unique in that it's personal, right. These people – you're going to know – in other words, you're going to know who's going to potentially attack you. You've been in court with them, right. That's the difference between judicial threats and say a celebrity stalker or a public figure of some sort. You're going to know who it is. Domestic violence being, you know, unique in and of itself. It's obviously very personal there too and then the school – the school threats, you know, we look at – that comes from current students, former students and what not, and today, the good part about where we are today and unfortunately, went through that process to get where we are, and especially in Florida with the new legislation that has been passed, you know, it's recognizable behavior, right. And so you can prevent before it happens, you know, you're intervening before it happens so you're recognizing these behaviors. You recognize that Timmy or Cindy has certainly not been the same person they've been, right, so there's a way to get in there early and to intervene along that, you know, that problem time for them.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So I think most of our listeners probably appreciate this, but I think it is significant to talk a little bit about the decisions that judges have to make that so personally impact people.

MR. MUFFLER: Right.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: If you haven't been to the courthouse or haven't been involved in some of these types of cases, you may not appreciate it, but in a domestic context, for example,

judges are called upon to make decisions about which parent may spend more or less time with a child or their children. There may be decisions made that impact finances, alimony or child support. There may be decisions made that terminate a parental – parental rights and in domestic violence of course, decisions made to take guns away from people for the protection of others. In our criminal courts, of course, decisions that can be life-long altering, sending folks to prison, making decisions about conditions of restraint or non-release. And those are the types of things that are very emotionally volatile. There's a tremendous amount of personal impact I think by those things, and so when you talk about the idea that we would likely have encountered or know those folks who may seek to threaten us, I can certainly appreciate that. I think there's some reality that all of us would say we've experienced.

MR. MUFFLER: I would say especially, and this is where the, you know, the federal courts are different than state and locals is, they're not hearing the family law cases, right. And much of – and I wish I could point to research and I wish that – if I could have one wish, I'd wish that there was more studies in judicial security related to the type of threateners, where they're coming from because I would – my personal experience would be, it's not necessarily – it's usually not the criminal element. It does happen and we can talk about that maybe later, but the civil cases, the family law cases, people who aren't used to being in a courthouse, you know, and I always say this when I do my presentations. It's much like a hospital. Nobody wants to be here, right. And so the emotions – they're already coming in with preconceived notions. We want to be heard. Then you add in the dynamics of a family strained and finances, those are all the triggers that make people take that step into that pathway. Begin with a grievance and an ideation and work their way down there, so certainly the family law cases and the civil cases are a hotspot. That's where the emotion comes from. So again, I would say this, I could add on one more thing, that's the likely point where you'd have impromptu violence in a courtroom. Perhaps something to happen to you or your staff because, you know, people aren't rational at that time. Outside the courthouse, we're talking about – we're talking about targeted violence at that point. Inside, we're talking about more of an impromptu, affective type of violence.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: I envision a couple of different spectrums. One is a spectrum of violence that begins somewhere down here low with perhaps threats of some sort to obviously the ultimate end violence, a spectrum of security situations for judges that range from in the

courtroom to potentially at home and everything in between. Where – tell me, what are some of the things you see in terms of threats and communications and things that sort of start on that end of the spectrum?

MR. MUFFLER: Right, so they can begin so benign, you know, maybe a Christmas card that shows up at your house. Well, how did you get my home address? Of course, the internet knows all so it's easy to find that out. So those are things that begin it. It could be a comment, could be a hand gesture, you know, like a finger across the throat or something like that. They could begin in a way that's not violent per se, but it's sort of the cookie crumbs along a pathway that gives you an indication of somebody's thinking and behavior, where they might be going. So the intervention piece is key there, right, so for a judge – I always say for a judge, you are your first – you are the first responder, not law enforcement, it's you. You have to understand the situation you're in, your environment. Understand what your baseline is, what's around you that fits, usually it's there. And what's that – what is that – what is that car doing in front of my house that I've never seen before? Like those are things that if you're observant, you can understand it and perhaps prevent what might be coming around the corner.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah. The – let's talk about the idea of the violence piece of this. We have threats. We have maybe communications. Obviously, the internet has facilitated a lot of that. You see it in social media. Can be a Facebook post, it could be a Tweet, more publicly perhaps. But at some point there's the potential that those threats cross a line to action. And what do you see as those particular attack points or danger places for judges and other folks who are perhaps public officials?

MR. MUFFLER: Right, so I would say you're looking at, as far as locations go, it's not inside the secure environment so much. It's the drop off and pick up points we would call that in protective terminology, which would be your home and maybe the garage where you park your car. If you're announcing on social media that this is your favorite restaurant and you go there every day or perhaps very regularly, that's something – that's something that I always say is information that's currency for an attacker. So the more that information is out there about you, it's easier to breach that and do it unknowingly. You wouldn't know it. If I'm a hunter, as in Calhoun's research, Hunters and Howlers, you don't know that I'm hunting you. If I'm a howler, I'm writing letters, I'm tweeting about you, I don't like you. That's better than not

knowing, okay. You can have at least – you can understand somebody’s thinking perhaps by reading tweets and blogs and whatnot. Not knowing is the danger zone, right. They’re hunting because no hunter wants to be – wants their prey to hear them coming, right. So it’s those situations outside secure environments that it’s helpful to be not so lost in your phone, not so lost in say other things and paying attention to where you are, you know, and understanding what is around you could be helpful.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: In that dichotomy of Hunters and Howlers, do howlers become hunters?

MR. MUFFLER: They can. They can, it’s rare. You know, I’d be concerned if I was getting a lot of communications by whatever means and it stops. I’d be concerned. The important part is that, and I can’t speak for your protectors in this circuit, as long as there is some – you have to communicate to them your concerns, these benign things that are happening, these odd things that you’re seeing so they can follow up, you know. They have to do their part and do follow up investigation and understand the behavior, and that could be a knock on the door. We have freedom of speech in this country, as you well know. I can say things that you just don’t like, you know. I could be pretty darn mean in what I say and put it out there. That’s free speech. It’s that next step over into that – into that, past the gray area that could be, you know, concerning. But while that’s happening, that information needs to be shared with law enforcement, your sheriffs, and there needs to be follow up, you know, so they can determine is it credible or not, what do we do. And just to take a step back to the conversation about Mosaic, what Mosaic can help potential victims, no matter which one we just talked about, is to understand what the likelihood may be, like how close is this person, or maybe not. And then law enforcement in this example with judges, perhaps they can give you protective detail if they feel it’s that serious. Maybe they put a car in front of your house at night. Maybe they drive you to work. Maybe you – if you don’t have a home security system, first of all, I would recommend you get one, you have one put in place. Those are things that, you know, when you’re triaging and assessing potential violence, there are things that you can put in play that become hurdles, right, and just making it harder and harder for that person who may take that step towards violence. Now you have all these layers that are in the way, and they may change their mind. They may get caught, right. And so as long as you’re doing that, that’s going to help.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Going back to the Mosaic for just a minute, is the idea behind Mosaic that you've identified a potential threat and you then apply that systems analysis?

MR. MUFFLER: Exactly. Exactly, so you're not just arbitrarily just running one on someone you don't like or, you know, it's going to come to your attention through some communication or behavior that, you know, you can follow up on.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Okay. All right. In your writings, and I've read a little bit of the things that you've written, you talk about this idea of situational awareness and you've touched on it a little bit already. But you know, to listen to your instincts, to be actively engaged in your surroundings, talk to me a little bit about that.

MR. MUFFLER: Yeah, whether you're a judge, public figure, someone suffering some sort of domestic violence, you know your area, you know what belongs in your area, talk about that baseline, but what fits and what doesn't fit, right. And then as you observe, you're able to make informed decisions to yourself that that doesn't belong. And then from that point on, you could make changes. You're listening to your intuition. And as Gavin would say, and I've repeated it through numerous presentations, especially to the judiciary is, think about this. And I hope I don't ruin this because he does it so well. Think about say an antelope that's having a drink of water down by the river bed and then hears the crunching of leaves nearby. It's not saying, oh, what is that? I should hang around and wait. It's out of there, right. You know, that's telling their in – they're listening to their intuition. Humans tend to turn it off a little bit because they don't want to be judgmental or this or that, but you have to listen to your intuition. It's a gift that Gavin often talks about that you listen to. You know, it's going to tell you what fits and what doesn't fit.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: I think it could – I'm imagining it could be a challenge. I mean, we come to this courthouse, for example, every day and it becomes much like home --

MR. MUFFER: Sure, routine.

CHIERF JUDGE MYERS: -- in the sense that I probably spend as many hours as I do at my home here. There is that routine and I think you develop perhaps a false sense of security about the surroundings and the things that are going on. I understand this concept of baseline. How do we get out of that false sense of security? What moves us? Is it just intentionality?

MR. MUFFLER: Yeah. Yeah, great question. So, right, routine's – it's so easy to be in a routine, right, and so one thing I would recommend is, when you can, is change up your route of travel coming to and from work every once in a while. That could be that little thing that is a big thing, you know, that if you were being followed, at least the person who was following you sees that there is a change in aberration into your pattern. So at the work place, sure, I mean, this is a secure environment. Just coming in here, I've never been to your court. Obviously, the footprint is massive and the security posture is massive. I mean, coming into the lobby, I mean, there's a really – you can get a really good sense that there is some – a really good, if not, excellent security program here. That being said, you know, people, they're human beings, right, in this – they work, they're magnetometers, you know, and I like to say that, you know, they're – don't forget, they're only metal detectors, they're not mental detectors because they can become quite crazy in your courtroom, right. They can – they can suffer from that moment of they can't deal, so there is those elements that are coming into play anyway that, you know, you're being more aware of what is happening or what might happen and anticipate those things. But yeah, routines are definitely something you try to remind yourself of, you know, it's a little bit of practice. I worked several years with the U.S. Marshals in the witness security division, everybody knows it as the witness protection program, and one of the things that they liked us to do is take different routes of travel to and from our houses because, you know, I think even to this day we have never lost – the Marshal Services never lost a witness with the caveat of they followed the rules, right. So you know, and I'm not at liberty to discuss much of that but the point being on routine is, change our routines to and from just to make it a little harder for people. It's like protective services 101, if I'm protecting you, whether you're the President or the Governor, a celebrity, whomever, take different routes of travel. At least, in that aspect of it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Sure. What are some of the things from your perception that courts generally do well with security?

MR. MUFFLER: I think having deputy – deputies in their courtrooms as a visual, hopefully they're trained. But I think that is one thing I've seen in most of my travels is the level of security provided to the judicial branch is more often than not much better than in other say work places.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: We do – I think we do have this sense of the idea that presence, just simply presence of armed uniformed deputies is a significant deterrent to potential danger. Is that a fair statement?

MR. MUFFLER: Very fair. Very fair. I would say again going back to the human factor, you know, hopefully they're in good shape, right. Hopefully, they're taking care of themselves because they're carrying a firearm, right. Think about being on an airplane with say an air marshal or any other law enforcement officer who's allowed to carry their firearm and they're falling asleep, you know. There's a gun on that plane. That's pretty bad. So those are things that, you know, obviously that can come into place because of the human factor. But certainly presence is key and I would hope it's backed up with good policies and procedures and training. And I would hope that that's followed by, if we're talking about say fire drills, active shooter drills, shelter in place, you know, those sort of things in any work place that you are, and I'm looking at you as the judge, especially the Chief Judge, you're part of that program. You have a leadership responsibility, not just with the circuit but with your individual work places, right, so I think that's one of the things I see as a failure sometimes is, we have all of this stuff but we never train to it or they train to it but we don't need to train with it because they're training with it and they're going to tell me where to go when there's an emergency. That's not going to work in an emergency. You got to know where to go. You got to know where the exit is, those sort of things.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: We talked about just briefly before we began our online conversation here about the Provenzano shootings, and obviously, here in the Ninth Judicial Circuit, we've been very personally impacted by this sort of not just threat, but carry-through by somebody who made the decision to become a violent actor and causing death. And I think that much of what we experience now, we would say is directly attributable to that incident. That was for us the threshold recognition that things have changed. And you've had a chance to listen to those, is that right?

MR. MUFFLER: Yeah, I did, it was fantastic.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Yeah. I think Judge Lauten did an excellent job of helping to carry that conversation and give us some insights into the background and the incident that happened itself and then the fallout from that for us here in the courtroom, in the courthouse, I

should say. I hate to even ask this question because I think it's potentially dangerous and it may not be a good question so you let me know but what is it that courthouses don't do well in security?

MR. MUFLER: Okay, so they're all – they're not all created or budgeted equally, I would say. So it depends on where you are in the country, and the state and the county. You know, you can easily see where the vulnerabilities are. When I say easily, from my background, and so again, I alluded to that or specifically said it, you know, preparation. You know, being prepared, understanding what the game plan is when the bell sounds, right. I was going to say when the gun goes off but hopefully not. Understanding where you need – what you need to do being you're a first responder, how you handle it. Like, where do you go, what do I do? You know, if you're relying on say your bailiff or your judicial administrator because they go to the training and they tell you. If they're out that day, because that's what's going to happen, you know, if they're out that day and you're waiting for them, that's one thing you need to be prepared for. I think one of the things that again, the protective intelligence piece is such a key piece into the overall safety, health, life safety of a courthouse. And that is information flow, two-way information flow. The courts are telling the sheriffs, the sheriffs are telling the courts. You know, now if there's a way to do that that could be more streamline, going to say the Chief Judge, and it's filtered that way. You can – you can figure that piece out. That's just a matter of procedure, but as long as there's standing policies and procedures and practicing to it, you're going to be all right. I think many places don't do that. In fact, when I was with the Marshal Service, I was on the advisory board at the National Center for State Courts. We did a study on these type of things and more or less, and I have the numbers in my head, 40, 45 percent of courts across the countries – country don't prepare themselves well, don't train for it well, don't even know that they have a policy or procedure in place. So those are the things that are important. That communication piece is foundational and the protective intelligence piece is right there with it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Probably most recent and on the minds of judges is the Judge Kocurek shooting.

MR. MUFLER: Kocurek.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Kocurek, thank you, in Texas. Tell us a little bit about what happened there and –

MR. MUFFLER: Well, I've had the – I've had the honor truly to meet her several months after the shooting, after she was out of the hospital, and then I've spoken at their – their being Texas, statewide conferences a couple of times. Then last October I spoke with Judge Kocurek at the National Association of Women Judges Conference, about 500 people there, other judges there and we talked about her case. Talk about moving, that case bugs me to this day. It bugs me because a week before she was shot, the shooter told law enforcement – the shooter – the shooter told his girlfriend and the girlfriend told, if I have that right, law enforcement, the DA investigator's office in Austin that he was going to kill a judge. Simple as that. That threat was deemed not credible. I don't know why. I can't imagine not following up on something like that. I feel that was dismissed without much due diligence. In fact, a newspaper reporter discovered who the shooter was just about a week later. So leading up to that case, leading up to the shooting in her driveway, most targeted violence towards judges happens, you know, at the home, so the shooter was able to find out where she lived quite easily through internet. Went and stalked her at her house a couple of times leading up to the shooting. Laid in wait for her. He actually – he tried and this is all public information at this point. He got a lay of the land of the house, went there a few times, like I said. He was going – he went to shoot her on a Thursday but the weather was bad and decided to come back Friday. He went jogging through the neighborhood in his street clothes. She noticed him. She was like – and she dismissed, well, that was odd, right, but he had been in her court two weeks prior and made – and had an utterance of, I'm going to get her. Again, these are all little things that are leading up to what happens a few weeks later, and the case – the only unusual piece about that case, the threat was communicated to law enforcement and not followed up on. So I mean, 101, you have to follow up on even the most benign inappropriate communications. This being a threat obviously. So as the shooter saw where she lives, understood that her son was on a sports team because they had sports boards you put as a proud parent in front of your house to support the particular child's activities, he was able to find the child's information on Twitter and follow via Twitter. So he was looking at the house and looking at his advantage points. She had a security gate that was flush with her house, where just like a garage opener, as she's coming down the street, she can open that up, take the car back there, close it behind her. That was her protocol. He noticed that.

So going back – going to the night of the shooting, he’s lying in wait. Football game was going on at the local high school. It’s late at night. She allows her son, who is just learning to drive, drive the vehicle. She’s in the passenger’s seat. Her sister and her, I believe her niece are in the backseat. So the shooter realizes that he needs some way to stop her from getting back past the security fence. So he finds a bag of leaves in the neighborhood and puts them on the driveway. What does that do? That stops the driver. That’s what he wanted. So her son gets out of the car to move the bag and thankfully she’ll say, he closed the door. Shooter comes out of the bushes and goes around to where she is and he’s yelling and slamming on – he being her son, yelling and slamming on the hood of the car, what’s going on here, what’s going on here. And he goes around to the driver’s side now. The door is closed and he shoots point blank four feet away. The rounds were such that they were – they fragmented and she was hit – she put her left arm up to protect her, you know, face. She was hit numerous times but by fragmented rounds. She lost a finger due to infection. I think she had like 37 surgeries. But you know, he got away. They caught him about a week later through some, you know, very good police work. And, you know, she spent quite a bit of time in the hospital. Came out and retook the bench sometime in 2016, I think it was. The shooting happened November 2015. So there’s this process when you look at – when you step back and look at it, there’s a lot of indicators, right. First of all, you had a threat that was dismissed. That threat never got relayed to the judge. It got as far as the bailiff who sits twenty feet from her and he decided not to tell her because it was deemed by law enforcement not credible. So if you were ever to think about this from this aspect, had she been told that there was a threat but the police or the DA’s office said they deemed it not credible, at that point you can say, you know, hindsight is twenty-twenty, why is that person jogging in street clothes looking at me? Why is there a bag of leaves blocking my driveway? And all the other little things that she recognized that were there, you know. Those were all sort of pieces along the pathway there that were dismissed. I think she would have had a better opportunity, and she’ll tell you that too, if you ever get to meet her, it would have made more sense obviously, paying more attention to those things that were not normal, right. But they were dismissed because she didn’t know about it.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: So perhaps the communication of the threat would have given her some context for those other clues along the way.

MR. MUFFLER: Absolutely.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: You know, just a horrific story but I think a very real recognition of the risk that the judiciary takes every day. We deal directly with the public. We acknowledge of course, that those risks are inherent I think in the work that we do. But as I said I think there is that false sense of security that falls over all of us as we do our job.

MR. MUFFLER: I would – I would add one more thing to that and then – especially – especially the folks who are at risk and especially the judicial community, judicial officers, you are part of the community, you live in the community you serve unlike say, you know, a politician who is at, you know, here in Florida, in Tallahassee. You know, you have to go home to your constituents, right, the people who are voting for you and you are surrounded by them. So that makes it more unique. That's one thing about judicial – being a judicial officer and judicial threats make that much more unique because you are in that community that you serve. And I would just say this, because this happens to me all the time, you know, that parochial thinking of, oh, if they're going to get me, they're going to get me. It comes with the territory. I've heard that numerous times and I wish I didn't – my only advice would be to, if I could change your perspective on that to those listening is, don't have that school of thought, you know. Do those little things that help your security, whether it's good locks, landscaping, security system, a dog, highly recommend a dog. They're very good understanding what belongs and doesn't belong, but put all those things in play. But please remove that parochial thinking of, if they're going to get me, they're going to get me, or it comes with the territory. That's – you're putting yourself between fatalism and fear and I would hate that you stay there. At least be more open to seeing and observing and then making those adjustments day-to-day.

CHIEF JUDGE MYERS: Great wisdom. John, thank you so much for visiting with us today and this is a conversation I'm sure we could spend hours winding our way through but we're grateful for you.

MR. MUFFLER: Appreciate it.

NARRATOR: You've been listening the "Open Ninth: Conversations Beyond the Courtroom" brought to you by Chief Judge Don Myers and the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of

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