Judge Machfigal

Interview with Judge Gayle Nachtigal

N-Nina

J- Judge Nachtigal

J- Okay.

N-And so if you want to start out with anything that you've noticed that's changed from 1980 to...

J-2005.

- N-.. In crime or law enforcement that would be great, and just talk, and that would be great. And then I'll ask you some more questions.
- J- Okay. I have a cough drop in my mouth, to start out with. Normally I wouldn't have it, but I have a terrible cough I can't seem to get rid of. Um. There clearly has been a change of crime between 1980 and 2005. Not just in Hillsboro, but generally across the state, we've added every time the legislator meets more and more crimes. Um. I have a poster in my office at the courthouse of the criminal statutes that were in effect in 1972, and it fills the poster.

N- Oh wow.

- J- It's pretty small type, but it fills the poster. Now this is the current criminal code in the state of Oregon, and this does not include the traffic codes. This is the traffic code. \* Holds both books up to show how big they are\*
- N- Oh wow. Those are huge. If you put them together...
- J- Now in all fairness, there are things in here that are procedures and such, but the crimes start with chapter one 62. Now these are all crimes. So what would you say for the tape recorder how big these are.... 2 inches, inch and a half?.
- N- Yeah. So these are crimes that have been committed?
- J- No, these are just describing criminal activities. Things that would be a crime. So, what we've done is, we've added new crimes. Computer crimes, Identity theft, and all kinds of new crimes in addition to don't steal, don't kill, you know that sort of crime.

N- Right.

J-And this is the traffic code that talks about all the things you have to do in order to operate motor vehicles correctly in the state of Oregon.

N- That's not smaller than the drivers manual \* Laughs at pathetic attempt to make a joke\*

J- Right it's huge. So clearly there has been a trend of adding new crimes and, something happens, we make a crime to try to solve the problem. One of the biggest trends, one of the biggest changes is the level of use of a particular drug; and that is meth. It is huge.

N- Is it a lot worse than it was in 1980?

J- Oh it didn't even exist in the 1980's. It was so unheard of. I did hear something that I didn't know before. That meth is the first drug that has gone from the West coast to the East coast. Most drugs have gone from the East Coast to the West Coast.

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Judge Nachtigal

N-Ah.

J- But meth started in the West. It started in Hawaii. And west coast, and moved across the country. But it's been in this area, you know, the pacific north west and pacific coast the longest. And it is a devastating drug. In 1979 when I first started, we didn't hear of meth. You heard of alcohol, marijuana, you had cocaine you had heroin. We rarely ever see heroin now, although it spikes up and down. But meth is probably 90% of the drugs we see now. It's huge. And the fallout from meth is all the identity theft, and the computers coming online, and the ability of getting information and misusing computers of course didn't happen in the 1980's, cause they didn't exist. They existed, but they weren't portable or useful in that way. So you add this devastating drug to the ability to create identity and checks, and things on the computer. And you've created this whole problem of Identity theft and those sorts of crimes. It just simply didn't happen before. Locally for Hillsboro, one of changes from 1980 to 2005 is the level of gang activity that has occured, that we didn't have in the 1980's. And that we really didn't have to any great degree, until the mobility was increased by light rail and those sorts of things.

N- Yeah. So you think that's had a big impact.

J- It's had a great impact. It's much easier to get here. You know, you don't have to just drive out here, you get here by Max. You don't have to sit on the bus and drive all over town to get here. So the gang activity has increased. Some of that is also Meth use, but gang activity is separate. So those are probably two really different things we've seen over that period of time.

N- So as a job in whole what do you do? And I know this isn't your regular office...

J- This isn't my regular office. Right now I am here in the arraignment court. So any judge that is here in the arraignment court. We do out of custody arraignments, and in custody arraignments which are advising people of the charges that have been brought against them. It's setting up their next court dates, getting them a jury.

N- Just like I just saw.

J- Just like we just saw. Uh we also do release hearings and pleas. So, the judges rotate through this courtroom a month at a time. Normally, I'm over at the court house and I handle whatever kind of trial that comes my way.

N- So what are the most common trials that you think you get? As of criminal activity?

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N-Yeah. Um, so do you think there are more juveniles doing crimes than there were in the 1980's, or is it about the same?

J- You know, I do not know the statistic on that, but I suspect...

N- Like what you see in the courtroom.

J- Well we don't see juveniles over here as much because those are handled in juvenile court. I think if you were to simply look at the raw numbers you would say yes, there are more juveniles committing crimes. The things you have to take a look at is the percentage of increase in juveniles between 1980 just in raw numbers and 2005. The population in Washington county over the last 10 years has increased 45%. So thats huge. So along with that comes more juveniles. So if you just look at numbers you would say, Oh my

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N-Okay.

J- We would see a lot of MIP parties at the close of school and at the start of school. For a while we had a whole rash of kids blowing up mailboxes with firecrackers. I don't know why, but they did.

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J- Another favorite sport was to go into the rural areas and shoot at mailboxes, or to beat them up with bats. Just dumb kinds of stuff. Criminal mischief kind of stuff. We would see theft and we saw burglaries and those. We saw some drug activity but again not nearly at the level that we're seeing now. So the kinds of crimes that the juveniles are committing are adult like criminal activities that we were seeing before, and more serious. And again, I suspect, although I haven't been in juvenile court in a long time, my guess is that meth is the fuel that is making this possible.

N- Do you think measure 11 has any effect on these crimes. Do you think they are scared?

J- No, I don't think measure 11 has a great impact on people not committing an act because they think they are going to be committing a measure 11 crime. Most people who commit crimes are not going to think about the consequences of their behavior. They do not think through what might happen if I do this. I think what measure 11 has done is that those individuals that engage in that kind of fairly violent behavior because that's mostly what measure 11 is dealing with. That they committed more of those kinds of acts so that the fact is that they have been taken out of circulation for a longer period of time means that there less able to commit those kinds of acts. But I don't know of any measure 11 person who said, well gee if I just thought this was a measure 11 crime I wouldn't of done it. They don't think of that. So in that sense no. Now for the average person it wouldn't take a measure, you know a law-abiding person, wouldn't take a measure 11 crime to say I'm not going to steal from Hanks. Because I don't want to go to jail for 5 minutes or 10 minutes or a day, so I'm not going to steal, cause I don't want to go to jail at all. You don't have to threaten me with 70 months to get me to behave, because I don't want to go for 70 seconds. But if I'm inclined to engage in robberies or if I'm using drugs and I'm engaging, or I'm a sexual predator, I'm not thinking about the consequences of my behavior. I'm not even thinking I'm going to be caught. So, it doesn't detour in that sense. I don't think it does.

N- So you were talking about how I.D. theft is pretty rampant right now...

J- Yup.

N- What do you do to deal with that.

J- Well its a difficult crime to deal with because once the damage has been done, it's very difficult to undo. The thing that we don't know, and really can't solve is how much of that information is out in the computer world, for anybody to get a hold of. So, it's difficult. One of the things we can do, and we do do, is prohibit the people (convicted) from having computers, or having somebody else's mail, and they can't; there is a lot of things they can't do, but you can't be watching everybody 24 hours a day.

N- So do they get sent to jail?

J- Sometimes they do get sent to jail and there is a new, there is a measure 11 for the violent crimes, very long sentences. Then there is repeat property offender sentences, and so if you commit an ID theft, and in the past you've committed a certain number of similar kinds of cases, you could go to the state penitentiary

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- N- Do you think if you helped with the meth problem that would help cut back on the ID problem?
- J- Oh certainly, certainly. The ID theft and the rise of meth are together. I don't know of any purical study that says they are related, but I don't know of any ID thief that wasn't also using, not at the exact moment, but using meth.
- N- So they try to get the money from the person to do that.
- J- Sure, Sure. They get your name and information from you from your mail in your mailbox. Or from stealing your purse. And then they take your ID and create new ID for them which then allows them to get credit cards in your name to their address and they run up the bill and they have no intention on paying it because they aren't having it directed to them, or they send it to a bogus address. And the first you know about it is when perhaps when a dunning letter comes saying, how come you haven't paid, or you go to use your credit card and it's maxed out. And that's the first you know you've got a problem. Or you run a credit check, and you suddenly find that you've got 5 credit cards that you've never heard of.
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- N- So what to you recommend to people to help with ID theft.
- J- Well one of the very first things I would tell anybody, if you've lost your wallet or if you begin to get odd solicitations or odd mailing to you to run a credit check. Take a look and make sure everything that is listed there you know about, and that there aren't any credit cards or bank accounts or whatever in your name somewhere that you don't know anything about. If you lose your wallet, cancel absolutely everything in there and start all over again. We had it. My husband lost his credit card, his business card. And they called up and concerned because there were a whole bunch of airline tickets that we have purchased. Well in reality the tickets were legitimate because I'm the president of the American Judges Association and I had a number of trips to make, and I made a number of airline reservations close together to various parts of the country that made no sense to anybody looking at it that didn't know what I was doing. So those were actually legitimate. That's what the credit card company was concerned about. What they were not concerned about were the teeth whitening that were done in the state of California on our credit card, or the other two Dish network system that was set up in the state of California. Well we don't live in California.
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N- Oh geez.

J- It's a big hassle. It's a big problem.

N- Also, when your in the courtroom do you think that racial bias plays in anything at all?

J- \* Coughs loudly\*

- N- Maybe not with you personally, but with any judge?
- J- Well, Judges are humans, We all have biases.

N- Right. Mmhm.

J- I think the very first thing you have to do as a judge is to say to yourself, I have biases. And I need to be aware of what they are and deal with them. For me, my bias, both of my parents are visionally impaired, they are blind. I grew up in a household with two blind parents. They both graduated from college. They both have masters degrees, they are professional people. In my world, blindness is not a handicap. Blindness is not an excuse to not have a job, or not to do something. So if someone were to come before me as a blind person and say, well it was me I can't do X, Y, or Z, my bias is, your just lazy that's why your not doing it. It has nothing to do with your handicap.

N- \*Laughs\*. Yeah.

J- So I have to, well I've never had a blind person come before me to say that, but when handicap come before me, I have to be careful about that, that I don't say, well, my mom can do it, so what's wrong with you. That's a bias.

N- Yeah.

- J- And if its going to cause a problem, I need to not hear that particular case. So I don't. So we all have biases. But everyone needs to know, you need to know for yourself what they are.
- N- And then you try not to let it affect your ruling.
- J- Absolutely. It shouldn't It should have no affect on the ruling at all. What you need to do is follow the statutes and follow the guidelines and follow the rules. Has it ever effected? Probably. I mean again, judges are humans. But there are enough checks and balances in the system, there are lawyers on both sides, and the guidelines and things to try to minimize that. Have I seen incidences of what I believe to be potential biases and racism, not so much anymore but there was a period of time where we would see a grouping of tickets together that without even looking at the defendants, the name of the defendants, my guess was it would be a Hispanic Latino name. You didn't see that grouping of tickets together with a name that didn't sound Hispanic. I suspect that the only reason that they got that grouping of tickets is because they are Hispanic.
- N- Yeah, so with the Hispanic population do you think that they are stopping a lot of Hispanics?
- J- You know its a hard thing to put your finger on. Because, there are probably percentage wise more poor people living in areas where there are more drug abuse and more crimes. It doesn't mean that all poor people are involved in drug abuse and crimes. But they live in an area where percentage wise there is more of it occurring. So yes they are getting stopped more. That's true. Because they live where more of this is occurring. Not having driver's license in some sense is more of a cultural problem. Because even though they do issue driver's licensees in Mexico and Central America, not having one is not the same kind of a problem as it is here. And so stopping somebody who doesn't have a driver's license and seeing that there are a large number of people with Hispanic surnames and no driver's licensees, that may not mean anything except that there are a number of Hispanic people who don't have driver's licensees, and that may be a cultural educational process that we need to go through. In this country, this is an important document. You need to have this document. If your an undocumented worker, it's kind of hard to get one.

N- Yeah.

J- And so some of that is a problem of whether your are legal or illegal. How do you get these important documents? Names is another thing. It's a cultural. If you ever looked at some Hispanic's names, it's very long. They can be. They can be hyphenated.

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J- We would see a lot of MIP parties at the close of school and at the start of school. For a while we had a whole rash of kids blowing up mailboxes with firecrackers. I don't know why, but they did.

N- \* Laughing\*

J- Another favorite sport was to go into the rural areas and shoot at mailboxes, or to beat them up with bats. Just dumb kinds of stuff. Criminal mischief kind of stuff. We would see theft and we saw burglaries and those. We saw some drug activity but again not nearly at the level that we're seeing now. So the kinds of crimes that the juveniles are committing are adult like criminal activities that we were seeing before, and more serious. And again, I suspect, although I haven't been in juvenile court in a long time, my guess is that meth is the fuel that is making this possible.

N- Do you think measure 11 has any effect on these crimes. Do you think they are scared?

J- No, I don't think measure 11 has a great impact on people not committing an act because they think they are going to be committing a measure 11 crime. Most people who commit crimes are not going to think about the consequences of their behavior. They do not think through what might happen if I do this. I think what measure 11 has done is that those individuals that engage in that kind of fairly violent behavior because that's mostly what measure 11 is dealing with. That they committed more of those kinds of acts so that the fact is that they have been taken out of circulation for a longer period of time means that there less able to commit those kinds of acts. But I don't know of any measure 11 person who said, well gee if I just thought this was a measure 11 crime I wouldn't of done it. They don't think of that. So in that sense no. Now for the average person it wouldn't take a measure, you know a law-abiding person, wouldn't take a measure 11 crime to say I'm not going to steal from Hanks. Because I don't want to go to jail for 5 minutes or 10 minutes or a day, so I'm not going to steal, cause I don't want to go to jail at all. You don't have to threaten me with 70 months to get me to behave, because I don't want to go for 70 seconds. But if I'm inclined to engage in robberies or if I'm using drugs and I'm engaging, or I'm a sexual predator, I'm not thinking about the consequences of my behavior. I'm not even thinking I'm going to be caught. So, it doesn't detour in that sense. I don't think it does.

N- So you were talking about how I.D. theft is pretty rampant right now...

J- Yup.

N- What do you do to deal with that.

J- Well its a difficult crime to deal with because once the damage has been done, it's very difficult to undo. The thing that we don't know, and really can't solve is how much of that information is out in the computer world, for anybody to get a hold of. So, it's difficult. One of the things we can do, and we do do, is prohibit the people (convicted) from having computers, or having somebody else's mail, and they can't; there is a lot of things they can't do, but you can't be watching everybody 24 hours a day.

N- So do they get sent to jail?

J- Sometimes they do get sent to jail and there is a new, there is a measure 11 for the violent crimes, very long sentences. Then there is repeat property offender sentences, and so if you commit an ID theft, and in the past you've committed a certain number of similar kinds of cases, you could go to the state penitentiary

for 13 months. So there is an effort to enhance those penalties for those repeat property offenders. But the fallout to the victims of ID theft is not at all resolved by somebody being convicted having done the ID theft. I mean it's awful, its a horrible thing.

- N- Do you think if you helped with the meth problem that would help cut back on the ID problem?
- J- Oh certainly, certainly. The ID theft and the rise of meth are together. I don't know of any purical study that says they are related, but I don't know of any ID thief that wasn't also using, not at the exact moment, but using meth.
- N- So they try to get the money from the person to do that.
- J- Sure, Sure. They get your name and information from you from your mail in your mailbox. Or from stealing your purse. And then they take your ID and create new ID for them which then allows them to get credit cards in your name to their address and they run up the bill and they have no intention on paying it because they aren't having it directed to them, or they send it to a bogus address. And the first you know about it is when perhaps when a dunning letter comes saying, how come you haven't paid, or you go to use your credit card and it's maxed out. And that's the first you know you've got a problem. Or you run a credit check, and you suddenly find that you've got 5 credit cards that you've never heard of.
- N- That's pretty bad.
- J- All in your name. And that's why its so very difficult to deal with. Because yes you can get those credits all off your record, but its a process that each time, that you, Identity thief/ meth user may have given the names you have to your friend Identity thief/ meth user and so we take care of you, but you've already passed the information off to somebody else, who waits a couple of months and does it again.
- N- So what to you recommend to people to help with ID theft.
- J- Well one of the very first things I would tell anybody, if you've lost your wallet or if you begin to get odd solicitations or odd mailing to you to run a credit check. Take a look and make sure everything that is listed there you know about, and that there aren't any credit cards or bank accounts or whatever in your name somewhere that you don't know anything about. If you lose your wallet, cancel absolutely everything in there and start all over again. We had it. My husband lost his credit card, his business card. And they called up and concerned because there were a whole bunch of airline tickets that we have purchased. Well in reality the tickets were legitimate because I'm the president of the American Judges Association and I had a number of trips to make, and I made a number of airline reservations close together to various parts of the country that made no sense to anybody looking at it that didn't know what I was doing. So those were actually legitimate. That's what the credit card company was concerned about. What they were not concerned about were the teeth whitening that were done in the state of California on our credit card, or the other two Dish networks system that was set up in the state of California. Well we don't live in California.
- N- Yeah, Obviously.
- J- I don't get my teeth whitened, and I don't have 3 Dish network things set up. So those ones we only found out about it when they called us about the airline tickets and then they said, well okay, so those are okay, but what about these. And so we then had to cancel all of our credit cards.
- N- Oh geez.
- J- It's a big hassle. It's a big problem.
- N- Also, when your in the courtroom do you think that racial bias plays in anything at all?
- J- \* Coughs loudly\*

- N- Maybe not with you personally, but with any judge?
- J- Well, Judges are humans, We all have biases.
- N- Right. Mmhm.
- J- I think the very first thing you have to do as a judge is to say to yourself, I have biases. And I need to be aware of what they are and deal with them. For me, my bias, both of my parents are visionally impaired, they are blind. I grew up in a household with two blind parents. They both graduated from college. They both have masters degrees, they are professional people. In my world, blindness is not a handicap. Blindness is not an excuse to not have a job, or not to do something. So if someone were to come before me as a blind person and say, well it was me I can't do X, Y, or Z, my bias is, your just lazy that's why your not doing it. It has nothing to do with your handicap.

N- \*Laughs\*. Yeah.

J- So I have to, well I've never had a blind person come before me to say that, but when handicap come before me, I have to be careful about that, that I don't say, well, my mom can do it, so what's wrong with you. That's a bias.

N- Yeah.

- J- And if its going to cause a problem, I need to not hear that particular case. So I don't. So we all have biases. But everyone needs to know, you need to know for yourself what they are.
- N- And then you try not to let it affect your ruling.
- J- Absolutely. It shouldn't It should have no affect on the ruling at all. What you need to do is follow the statutes and follow the guidelines and follow the rules. Has it ever effected? Probably. I mean again, judges are humans. But there are enough checks and balances in the system, there are lawyers on both sides, and the guidelines and things to try to minimize that. Have I seen incidences of what I believe to be potential biases and racism, not so much anymore but there was a period of time where we would see a grouping of tickets together that without even looking at the defendants, the name of the defendants, my guess was it would be a Hispanic Latino name. You didn't see that grouping of tickets together with a name that didn't sound Hispanic. I suspect that the only reason that they got that grouping of tickets is because they are Hispanic.
- N- Yeah, so with the Hispanic population do you think that they are stopping a lot of Hispanics?
- J- You know its a hard thing to put your finger on. Because, there are probably percentage wise more poor people living in areas where there are more drug abuse and more crimes. It doesn't mean that all poor people are involved in drug abuse and crimes. But they live in an area where percentage wise there is more of it occurring. So yes they are getting stopped more. That's true. Because they live where more of this is occurring. Not having driver's license in some sense is more of a cultural problem. Because even though they do issue driver's licensees in Mexico and Central America, not having one is not the same kind of a problem as it is here. And so stopping somebody who doesn't have a driver's license and seeing that there are a large number of people with Hispanic surnames and no driver's licenses, that may not mean anything except that there are a number of Hispanic people who don't have driver's licensees, and that may be a cultural educational process that we need to go through. In this country, this is an important document. You need to have this document. If your an undocumented worker, it's kind of hard to get one.

Below is the image in its original context on the page: www.ayaran.com/photo/ thumbnails.php/

J- And so some of playing by the the companies lead of the playing p

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- N- Yeah. They take some of the Father's and some of the Mother's name.
- J- Right. It's a different naming process than we use. And someone who is a true migrant worker who has very low education in their own country and is probably next to illiterate in their own language coming up here, do not understand the importance that we put on what is your true and correct name. They don't understand the issue of that. So they give a name. And they make the argument that giving your true and correct name to a dishonest police officer in Latin America that would be a very dangerous thing for you to do. And the very best thing for you to do is to give a fake name.

N- Yeah.

J- That's a cultural problem. But it presents a huge problem for us, when we track things by people's true and correct names. And if you don't give the correct name, we might arrest somebody who has the same name, who didn't do it. We recently had an incident here where we arrested an individual in the state of Georgia. He had a fairly common Hispanic name and the date of birth matched the name. But the problem was that it wasn't him. He had never been in the state of Oregon. We couldn't match his finger prints. We now know the name of the person we want. That person simply used somebody else's name.

N-Oh.

- J- So now we've arrested this person in Georgia. He had nothing to do with the crime that occurred. It was a driving offense here in Oregon. And so we really inconvenienced this person in Georgia. And getting arrested and put in jail for the night when he didn't have anything to do with it. So, you know, that's a problem, it's part cultural, it's part lack of education, and so certainly it would appear that there would be more individuals of Hispanic decent that would have those charges against them. Some of it may be, in some parts of the state more motivated than others. It's just a problem. And there may be a better way to try to resolve it, rather than making a crime out of it, maybe an education process or something would be better from the criminal process. Right now, its a criminal offense.
- N- So do you think Hillsboro is doing anything to increase homeland security?
- J- You know I don't have any idea. That's probably a better question to ask either Ron Louie the chief police, or Sheriff Warden. I assume they are. I would assume they are doing, getting the grants and doing the things for that. In part, and it wouldn't necessarily be something we would know about, because if you told the things we would be doing, your not doing anything. It's a secrete. It needs to be a secrete, so that we can take care of the problem if there is one. I don't think that Hillsboro or Washington county is a hot bed for Al- Qida activity. So there is probably not a lot of foreign terrorism that we need to be worried about. There may be some homegrown terrorism as there has always been. White supremacy.
- N- Do you ever see that around here?
- J- Sure.
- N- I've never seen that around.
- J- We saw far more of it probably in the late 1980's early 90's. There was a rash of white supremacy.
- N- Is there a reason that would be?
- J- Here in this county?
- N- Yeah.
- J- Well, um. Historical, the KKK had one of their grand wizards in the 1930's lived in forest grove.
- N- Oh wow.

Nachhaul

J- I'm sure there is some of that. I don't know if they act out on that, but I'm sure there is some, if you were to read the police log, you'd keep seeing Hispanic surnames and you might jump to the conclusion that anyone with a Hispanic surname is involved in criminal activity, which would simply be wrong. And so I'm sure some of that occurs. And we all want to blame somebody for problems, because it just can't be me. I can blame it on somebody else. There has been a great growth in the Spanish speaking population. And I think that has changed, in some cases much better. Our countries built on people from different countries coming together. That's how we got to be who we are. So it's a good thing in that regard. But it does cause in some people to be less tolerant. You know, you ought to speak English. I'm not going to bother with you because you don't speak my language. People from Germany didn't come over here speaking English, so we kind of forget that. But I'm sure, there are certainly more people that are less tolerant than they ought to be.

N- Do you ever see Hate Crimes in the courtroom?

J- Not in a while. Again I think our tolerance as a population we recognize that that behavior isn't expectable. And so in some sense I think it has gone down. I'm sure is still exists. And some of it may be not reported. It may be occurring, but the victims are not comfortable coming to the police. And that you'll never know. But I haven't seen a true hate crime from the trails. Now we have seen road rage. Now if that is a hate crime.