Human Rights Conversations Across Generations
Guadalupe Marengo episode
Transcript of edited conversation
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MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04
Hi, welcome to our podcast, Human Rights, Conversations Across Generations. I'm Meredith Lockwood, founder of Lockwood Creative, a purpose-driven creative agency. And I'm here with my dad.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:16
And I'm Professor Bert Lockwood, the director of the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights at the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:26
Together, we are your father-daughter co-hosts.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:29
For over 50 years, I've had a front-row seat to the evolution of international human rights.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:35
And now, we're sharing that expertise with you by connecting to the powerful stories and insights of human rights voices from around the world.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:43
We bridge the past and the present, making complex human rights issues more approachable and understandable.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:50
So, pull up a chair and join our table as we speak with Nobel Peace Prize recipients, political leaders and the world's leading human rights scholars and activists.

Today, my dad and I are joined by Guadalupe Marengo. She is the head of the Global Human Rights Defenders Program and head of the Global Relief Program at Amnesty International. Amnesty International is one of the world's most respected human rights organization with a movement of more than 10 million people across the globe. At the heart of its mission is the protection of human rights defenders who are lawyers, journalists, teachers, community organizers, health care providers, and everyday people who put their lives on the line to speak truth to power. Under her Amnesty's Relief Program has provided urgent relocation, legal aid, medical support, and direct assistance to thousands of defenders in crises around the globe. My dad served on the board of Amnesty USA, and I have proudly been a volunteer with the organization since I was young. As you'll hear, our conversation kicks off with us going back to the 1990s to connect the dots on our shared time in Essex, England. So, without further ado, I am so pleased to welcome Guadalupe to the show.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:16
we had the pleasure of having you tune in from Mexico. Where in Mexico?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 2:21
I'm in Mexico City at the moment. Yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:25
I was just there January and I stayed in Roma de Norte. so Mexico City is home, but also London is where you currently reside as your second

GUADALUPE MARENGO 2:37
home. Yes, I've been. Yeah, I've been in London for 30 years now. My son, who's 28, was born there. So I think home is London. And this is where I'm from. And I'm very much from Mexico. And I come often and I love it. But home, I would say, is London now.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:54
my dad and I, with our family, were just in London for Christmas. So my dad used to human rights at University of Essex in Colchester.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 3:04
Oh, no, you didn't.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:05
Yeah.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 3:07
I know. So I did applied linguistics at Essex many, many years ago, because first I did English literature and then I went to do an MA applied linguistics at Essex. Before the human craze came out, before Essex created the Human Rights Center, before everybody was doing human rights MAs and BAs and all of that, which that was before my time, you know. It's all 90s more, isn't it? The whole human rights academic stuff.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:39
Yeah. Kevin Boyle Nigel Rodley were

GUADALUPE MARENGO 3:43
Exactly.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:43
very, very dear friends.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 3:44
Nigel Rodley.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:45
was just saying to I was curious with your background at Amnesty and the greatness of Nigel Rodley and, our listeners, we have a tribute episode to Dear Nigel. Lin came on,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 3:58
Lovely.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:59
he was a close family friend and, you know, obviously as one of the legal minds and, co-founders of Amnesty International, I was just curious if you guys had gotten to intersect in your work and, uhm, all that you do.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 4:12
Definitely did, because I started at Amnesty in the mid-90s, more or less, and Nigel just left being the head of the Law and Policy Department, but obviously he was coming and going, he was then Special Rapporteur, or at the time, I can't remember whether afterwards, or close to after I started, became the Special Rapporteur on Torture, so there were lots of, eh, and then, of course, the Essex connection as well, so, yes, I did coincide with Nigel, oh no, he didn't work at Amnesty at the same time as I did, jus because he had already left, and I suppose what he was doing is, eh, you know, creating the Center, I assume.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:53
Well, I, I uh, when he was the Special Rapporteur.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 4:57
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:58
that he still relied, he got about 95% of the information from Amnesty.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 5:05
Yep. And then, I, I, I did go uhm, to the tribute did to him both. There was one at the, at the International Secretariat in London, which I'm sure, I don't know whether you visited, but there, and then, one at Essex as well, if I'm not mistaken.

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:19
Yes. were you at the Essex one?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 5:22
I was, I was, I was. Yeah, were you there?

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:25
Yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:26
Oh!

GUADALUPE MARENGO 5:28
We obviously coincided with these people, but you know, well, difficult with all those people. So, when were you there? When were you at Essex?

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:36
was there twice. Meredith, do you know?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:39
Ninety-four. then 2001 to 2002.

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:43
Yeah, no, Essex is a very special in our hearts.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 5:47
I know exactly what, well, obviously for me as well, because I arrived from Mexico in the beginning of the 80s, City scared because I had finished my, I had finished here my BA in English literature, and so I got a grant to study in England, and of course, I didn't want to, them to think that Mexico didn't do well, you know, this is England now, they must be there. So, God, was I scared, and I think maybe because I was, you know, scared, you know, but I just didn't want them to think that the UNAM here wasn't a very good university, who do they think they are? So, I think I overdid it, I overdid it, and I really studied hard, and I didn't want to, so I did actually quite well, and I was very proud. So, all of that happened to me at the beginning of the Now,

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:33
day. Ha, ha,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 6:33
ha.

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:33
ha,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 6:34
no British university is going to beat me.

So interesting what happens in one's head, you know, but that was a big motivation for me. Nobody was going to think that the national university in Mexico City wasn't good enough.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 6:55

And then from your time at University of Essex, did that take you into London?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 6:59
it didn't really. No, no, no, no. I came back. taught here at the university, and then I went back,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 7:06
Oh,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 7:06
to do that, to start a PhD because I really liked it, but I wasn't ready, and it wasn't the right topic, and I always wanted to something else, even though I enjoyed, and I would like to do an MA in literature now when I retire. eh, I wasn't ready for a PhD, so I had a bit of a breakdown, thinking, what do I do? What do I do? What do I do? You And

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:29
know?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 7:29
that was in my sort of late 20s, and, I left the PhD, very embarrassed, but very quickly realized that nobody really cared, apart from me. Like, ah, okay, you left a PhD, good luck, whatever, you know, the world didn't mind. You know, they understood. And that's when I started changing and rethinking what I was going to do. And I think I should have, done law or sociology instead of literature, to be fair at the beginning, but don't ask me how. You know those things where you haven't got it clear, and you end up doing literature in your 20s? A few young people have got clear what exactly they want to do, you know? I think most of us, it could be anything, it could be anything, really, in a way. But,

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:16
You know, it's why very much prefer the college degree that's liberal arts, where you take a whole range of

GUADALUPE MARENGO 8:24
Absolutely.

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:24
subjects.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 8:25
I agree.

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:25
think the British force people, too soon.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 8:29

Too soon? Into something. I think I am with you on that, as well, you know?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 8:35
I, because I graduated from school in England, they're year 11, which in America's are year 10, so we're sophomores. And I have to give my dad credit, because we came back and graduated high school in America, and then I went to university in America, and he really encouraged liberal arts, and just said, take a bunch of classes, see what kind of fits. And But honestly, I don't think it was until maybe my sophomore or junior year of university where I was like, okay, I really love my program. I want to graduate with this.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 9:05
Absolutely. I totally understand. I think that's why I had that sort of break with the PhD, you know. It was just too, I was just too young for all of that, for getting into corner or tunnel, which perhaps wasn't my thing. Having said that, I mean, it's fine as well, you know, to change and to sort of A I said, I'm going to do an MA in American literature one of these days, definitely, just to play, just to play. I love it. To go back to it,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 9:37
Oh,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 9:37
yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 9:37
and

GUADALUPE MARENGO 9:37
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 9:37
it'll be there for you.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:39
might have been anthropologist, but I went to a small liberal arts in St. Lawrence, which has about 2,000 students, and I very much like that small school setting. One of the disadvantages is they had one anthropologist, I took his introductory class, and I think it was probably my favorite subject, he was on sabbatical for my last two years, and I could only take the one class.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 10:09
Guadalupe, was there a spark in your childhood growing up in Mexico City that was a calling to human rights, or did it organically happen as you moved through the world?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 10:20

No, I, I, I think there were, there were quite a few incidents as a child. So I had a very sort of middle class, perhaps even lower middle class upbringing here in Colonia Roma, where you've, you've been. And quite early on, I did as a child started realizing, you know, I don't think I was putting in those words that I put now. My privilege and how others in the same city didn't have that privilege that I had, you know, that I could first of all, to school, that we could come back home, have food, then, you know, perhaps do French lessons in the afternoon, you know, speak another language, travel a bit. So I think very early on, I started realizing that there was obviously something that I didn't like or I didn't understand. I think that was the beginning of my spark. I went to really, very privileged school here in Mexico City. And then when I went to the national university, which is then a mix again, even though, of course, if you get to university, you are already quite privileged. But the, the social classes were not just the elite. It was sort of the other social classes as well. And that's when I, when I also realized, you know, some of colleagues, colleagues or student friends at school, you know, they had to travel two hours to get to university. I just had to take a little car in 20 minutes. I was there. So all those things starting, started sort of bothering me. Th issue of, and it wasn't about civil and political rights. It was more about economic, soci and cultural rights that I began to be more aware. I don't think I was as aware at an early age, as a teenager or in my early 20s of civil and political rights. I was more aware of the social and economic rights living in this city. I suppose maybe because I wasn't mixing necessarily with people that were being affected. There were plenty of people in this city and in this country that were affected also by civil and political rights, you know, starting in the 60s. But it was too early for me, the 60s. Then my parents and the people we mixed weren't sort of part of that. Okay. Unlike, for example, Claudia Sheinbaum's parents who are, Claudia Sheinbaum is more or less my age and her parents were at it. And my parents weren't, they weren't, they weren't political in that sense. You know, I think they were aware of inequality as well, but not in the, in that other political sense. So I think that's when, where, how I started sort of thinking about, you know, privilege and non-privilege. And what, what I, what had I done to be able to do what I was doing? And actually, quite quickly, I started realizing that I really hadn't done anything apart from be born in the right place at the right time. Or in a better place, if I could have been born in somewhere different and the, the, the path would have been slightly different. Yes, I took opportunities and yes, I studied hard. But the beginning, the beginning, the beginning, I had already a, a big advantage, you know, by month one of me being born. Something along those lines.

BERT LOCKWOOD 13:40
Were human rights defenders in Mexico that at that time when you were growing up that you admired

GUADALUPE MARENGO 13:48
Yes, yes, but I wasn't so much aware of it, because I think I was, I suggest I was in the bubble where that wasn't part of what people were saying. In fact, I might have even been in the bubble where people were actually saying, well, they must have done something wrong, and that's why they are being attacked, okay? And already quite early on, I did start thinking, hmm, did they do something wrong, or didn't they do something wrong, these people that the adults are sort of talking around me. And that then takes me back to what I was mentioning. I think

that's what happened when I went into literature and then into linguistics, and then I changed when I really, and that's when I started sort of consciously thinking, no, I need to do something with social justice. Oh, so, whatever I do, it'll have to be something or about social justice. And I then did an MA in women's studies, one of the very first MA's in women's studies, LSC, three or four women got together. They were being a bit sort of looked at. I remember those lecturers saying, nobody wants us to do this, but we're going to do it anyway. And they were giving a bit of a space At LSC, I was in London, and they were giving a bit of a space at LSC, and I did an MA in women's studies, one of the first ones, I suppose, many But at the same time, started working in prisons in Britain. And two things I did. One, visiting Latin women in prison. They were mainly mules, you know, carrying drugs at the time, and they were detained at airports in particular. So there was a group called Grupo Amiga. And I became friends with them, and that's how I found out that they visited those women who didn't have anybody. They were in the middle. They were mainly from Colombia at that time. I suggested, and they were just going to go, deliver the drugs, and then go back. And obviously, that didn't happen. They ended a UK prison without anybody visiting them. So it was visiting them, getting them things, things that they needed. So that was one thing that I did. And through that, I thought,hmm , I think it's interesting working with women, and then with women prisoners. And got a job, I was very lucky. I did apply, and I got it in a very small organization also in London. It used to be called CAST. And what CAST did is they supported women, that were being released from prison, to sort of find a place to live. Because those people were, in general, those women were mainly women without the network, or women without any of the other privileges that we've been talking about here. the organization supported them in finding, you know, accommodation, and how they were getting them ready for all the different benefits that at the time Britain sort of offered, you know, so they had all of that. And they well, restart their lives, really, after having been in prison. And then I was then very lucky again, because a job at Amnesty appeared. And I had always been, because this working in the UK, it was mainly within the UK. I always this idea, well, Latin America, Latin America. So a job opened up in the Americas region at Amnesty, mid-90s, and I applied for it, and I got it. So I became a campaigner first, mainly on Peru in particular. And I did a few years just researching human rights violations and doing campaigns within Peru, which was amazing. my, it's still one of my favorite countries. I sometimes think, don't tell them, I even prefer the Peruvian

BERT LOCKWOOD 17:54
anyone.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:54
food.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 17:55
Chicken food, don't tell tell anyone.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:58
Okay, for our listeners.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 18:01
so I did Peru for about 10 years. And then I started doing the whole of Latin America, not Colombia. I've never done Colombia. And I've never done Mexico either, because Amnesty had this rule. I don't know whether you know, or maybe you haven't heard, up to about 10, 15 years ago, Amnesty had the rule that you couldn't work on your own country. So I couldn't work on Mexico. And, at, when I started at Amnesty, I had already become also a British citizen, so I wouldn't have been able to work on the UK. That rule has changed now, and, you know, it's, it's different.

BERT LOCKWOOD 18:40
and I think it quietly, violated in the US, uh, branch.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 18:46
okay.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 18:47
and Dad, Guadalupe might not know that you were on the board of Amnesty International

GUADALUPE MARENGO 18:50
Ah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 18:51
USA.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 18:51
yes, no, I don't, I, I didn't know about maybe, but which he is?

BERT LOCKWOOD 18:56
Oh, boy. not, Paul Hoffman Uh, he's one of my dearest friends,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:01
Wow,

BERT LOCKWOOD 19:01
and, when he took over again, to be chair, he asked me to run for the board because he needed some sane people to work with. It had become sort of, uh, dysfunctional.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:15
Yes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 19:16
Bill Schultz the director.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:18

Wow, Bill.

BERT LOCKWOOD 19:19
At, at the time, yeah.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:21
Yes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 19:21
I have a book series with the University of Pennsylvania Press, and so he wrote two books in, in that series. yeah, no, Paul and have done five major, uh, human rights conferences, at Cincinnati, but so we've sort of co-sponsored them.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:37
that, that must have been in the nineties, because Paul Hoffman, I remember Paul Hoffman being at Amnesty USA,

BERT LOCKWOOD 19:45
he was chairing he'd be chair of the board, but he, I mean, he was, he wasn't an employee.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 19:50
No, no, no, no, I know, but the name is very familiar. And maybe I had just started, or whatever, very familiar as part of Amnesty USA, so if it's very familiar, it must have when I was starting, or as I was starting at the organization,

BERT LOCKWOOD 20:03
he argued a case before the U. S. Supreme Court. he has done most of the cases, that involve international human rights that have made it to the Supreme Court. He's, he's been the lawyer that's argued those cases before the

GUADALUPE MARENGO 20:18
Yeah,

BERT LOCKWOOD 20:18
court.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 20:19
dad, I think your time at Amnesty, as Guadalupe said, must've been the nineties because one, and I, and I've shared this on the show before that one of my earliest memories of an Amnesty international connection was my dad taking my siblings and I to an Amnesty meeting or volunteer event. And this would've been in Cincinnati, where we were writing letters and like drawing art for, political prisoners in different countries. And that's one of my first memories of Amnesty International. And I was quite young at the time. and Guadalupe, if I could ask you about, the women you supported in prisons in Great Britain, I imagine those women were so

vulnerable, so scared. And like you said, they were used as mules and really thought they were going back to their home country, Columbia, et cetera. Were you also able to be a translator for them? I'm just curious that the British prison system even had a translator for these women who might have had little to no English.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 21:22
I wasn't a translator before judges because once I met them, they had already been, they had already been sentenced. So no, but I was a translator while, while I visited them in prison. Exactly. You know, asking for things within the prison system. Because absolutely, I mean, you're talking 92, 93, 94, you know, very different way of looking at the world, you know, and you were there and you were there and you just had to put up with it. Having said that, even though it was slightly different, What they did have in those prisons, which I think has now deteriorated very badly in the last sort of decades, they did offer quite a lot of courses. So you could see, like for example, I used to go and cut my hair there because, you know, they were offering courses, you know, for people practicing to cut hair. So they had courses on that. They had English courses. They had various things. So that did happen. And I knew quite a few of the teachers as well, having sort of started visiting these people. So they did get that, but definitely their English wasn't good enough. And I don't know what happened exactly, or I wasn't aware, but I could think as to what had happened during the trial, you know, and they were just sort of the mules in general. So they had been, I'm sure many times, not necessarily totally forced. They were aware of what they were doing, but you know, within, within a patriarchal system, within a system where people, you know, they haven't got any resources, which is then, I sometimes wonder, and I'm going to jump a bit just because I find that similar to the whole Epstein scandal and the whole Me Too scandal. that it's not straightforward to say no. And it's not straightforward depending on where you are and in which system you, you are, you know, and even within that, you know, I sometimes think of myself, well, even though I was privileged, many things happened to me within patriarchy at university, which were low key. And, but I mean, I used to smile about it, so I'm very lucky that the women now don't smile about it, you know, that there's no smiling anymore, like, excuse me, no, not like this. Don't talk to me like this. Don't put your hand on me like this, whatever they do, the low key stuff. So it can't be easy to say no. It can't be easy to say no. So I'm, I'm, I'm just relating that to those mules, you know, but it was seen as if, well, it's your fault and that's it.

BERT LOCKWOOD 23:54
I just reading four books on uh, Epstein matters. I, well, I've, I've been fascinated by it, as, as you say, it's, sort of different, uh, justice systems for those that are rich and powerful from those that aren't.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:10
And, you know, Guadalupe one documentary I rewatched cause I was in Mexico city January was Frida Kahlo's

GUADALUPE MARENGO 24:18
Ah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:19
and, something that I think was so inspiring about her is when she would travel to New York city with Diego Rivera she did not like New York city. And back then the rich and famous were the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilt. And

GUADALUPE MARENGO 24:31
yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:31
she saw capitalism and the powers of the rich and the 1% way back then and was open about it and talked about it. And then seeing where, man at the crossroads, the beautiful mural that Diego was painting, in the Rockefeller Center. And then obviously the controversy with him and Rockefeller got banned. It, I mean, we're seeing history continue to repeat itself and that we're still fighting the 1% around the world, the Epsteins, the Trumps, et cetera.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 25:03
very interesting what you're saying, Meredith, because there is an exhibition here at the moment, literally at the Museum of Modern Art here in Mexico, of paintings from this collection by couple called Gelman. They were Gelman, they arrived here, from Lithuania in the 30s, became friends with Diego Rivera, became friends with Frida Kahlo, so they have, their collection has got, when they weren't even that expensive. Or just, you know, they were the local people, when they were, so they collected quite a few, and the collection is now here. And as part of the collection, the story of what happened with, you know, in New York and with the Rockefellers, and you're so right, it's, it's, we're still at it. We're still the one percent, the one percent, the one percent, how, what do we do about that one percent, which takes me to the 90s at Amnesty, and then the big, the push to do social and economic rights. Because we used to just concentrate on, civil and political rights, which was a natural, I think, it had to be done. There was quite a lot of, people that didn't, didn't agree. They said, well, we haven't even sorted out civil and political rights. How are we going to now sort out social and economic rights? And it's not the same. Some rights are more fundamental than others. Then how do you support social and economic rights? The right to housing, the right to health, the right. I was always quite supportive of that. And I did see how there was no way we could just sort of continue just doing civil and political rights, which is also quite a divisive way of looking at it, beca it was very much the North, or the global minority, I think, as I have to call it now. The global minority, which I love, the global minority, thinking themselves, which I can understand why. And the good is that, well, they lived in the free world, and now you needed to do the same for these other countries that didn't live in the free world. So it was that division, wasn't it? It was very much a Cold War type of sort issue. But I do think it's been really good that we have moved on and that we now embrace, you know, him, because they're all interrelated and they, you can't have without the other. Who are the people in general know, get it in the neck for civil and political rights where they're less privileged? So in a way, it's related, I think, or interrelated.

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:33
And Meredith, you should know on the opposite side that fought against that was Nigel Rodley was the person who was opposed to expanding the focus.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:44
Oh.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 27:46
I think he was convinced in the end, maybe. I don't

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:50
Yeah, well, what I remember is his concern was that the broader you get, you sort of dilute the power. So I think that was his principal as opposed to not believing in economics.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 28:07
No, exactly. And I think there is a point in highlighting that we might have become, as the human rights movement, just to dilute it, you know, we do a bit of this, a bit of this, a bit of this, a bit of that. And maybe I sometimes, for example, do think, well, what if Amnesty for two years just did one thing? Okay. What is the annual report? And we've just launched the annual report as you know. What if the annual report was just about one thing for two years? Maybe it would have more impact. I don't know. So it's very difficult to see, but I think it's not easy.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:46
Yeah, I think one of the difficulties is that they are very much interrelated. even if you're talking about torture, I mean, the civil and political rights are key to being able to protect those that are going to, you know, focus on torture and oppose it. of course, you know, everyone thinks of Amnesty now,right , as like the chief human rights NGO in the world, along with Human Rights Watch. But I can remember in the early days, going up against what I call the mandate police, is that you had these people saying, oh, no, you can't do that, you know, that human rights issue, because that's not within our mandate. And it was just very frustrating for those of us that were in the human rights field generally, I mean. You know, sort of covered the gamut of, uh, issues, but, uh, those were interesting days. That, that was when I was on the national board of, of amnesty. we would run into, people that were opposed to so I sort thought of where you give a badge of authority to, uh, local policemen or something and that they sort get inflated in terms of their sense importance and,you know. Perhaps overreacted,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 30:09
Ego power.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 30:11
Totally.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 30:12

Yes. Guadalupe, you lead Amnesty International's Global Human Rights Defenders Program and the Global Relief Program on that, and I wanted to let our listeners in because I know human rights defenders is a very familiar term, but I think sometimes these terms we use often, people might not realize the depth and the variety of human rights defenders around the world. Could you give us some insight?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 30:38
Sure. a really important question because sometimes the word human rights defender appears as if it's, for example, just the lawyers, for example, you know, they defend human rights and who are the defenders? Well, the lawyers. And no, we're not talking about lawyers. We're talking about anybody. I, I describe it like this. Anybody that takes injustice personally and does something about it in a particular moment. So it's anybody of any walk of life. And I sometimes say, so if one of our relatives sees, you know, an injustice and thinks, no, this injustice needs to be, we have to do something about to get the group of people together in their neighborhood. You know, there is an injustice in a local school or there is injustice about, there are no medicines for a particular group of people or somebody was discriminated against. So they get together and they do an action about it. So in that particular moment, that person and those people that got together are defending human rights. Okay. So it's anybody, it can be anybody from any walk of life. It is true that now, you know, many years after the Declaration came to early, late 40s, many people, the human rights, there are people like me or perhaps like Bert that, know, do human rights, know, as a profession. You know, they are part of, so there are many non-governmental organizations, there are many groups where people, so we might be know, 24-hour human rights defenders because we work on this. But we're really not the only ones and there are far more people that are out there that haven't studied human rights, that don't work in the human rights organizations, that have never been to the UN or to, in Geneva or in New York or somewhere And that's why, you know, we don't know, we don't know about the we have taken injustice personally forever. I mean, it has, and that's how we have evolved, you know, it's not as if, it's a new concept and a new thing. We've always sort of been, now, it's now written down, there are laws about it, which makes a difference. But taking injustice, know, seriously and not liking injustice, I think it's a very clear human condition. So I'm quite positive that most people out there actually don't want human rights to be violated. I don't know whether that clarify who these people are, Meredith.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 33:15
Oh, absolutely. And, I wanna spotlight the courage and bravery of, as you said, the ordinary people who take these injustices personally and decide to act on them and that you don't need a law degree to be a human rights defender. you know, there's teachers and artists and healthcare professionals, trade unionists, community organizers, um, parents, you know, who have lost their children to disappearances or torture or police state violence and they decide that they're gonna use their grief and stand up against Um, and, and I think now more than ever with the state of the world, particularly with Amnesty International's current report that came out, we are in a bit of a crisis, on how many human rights unfortunately and very tragically are killed. And if, and if I get this statistic correct, I think it says about one human rights defender a day is killed around the world.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 34:12
I'm going to just start first with one of your comment, Meredith, and that's the bit of, yes, it's, there are many people out there that defend, our rights. If you are like, us three here, that maybe, you know, we're lawyers, maybe Bert is a lawyer, I can't remember whether you said you were one, or me that is doing it 24 hours a day. And then there are specific people. And then there are people in, among those that don't, that are doing human rights out there that are taking justice personally, they don't even see themselves as human rights defenders. So for example, last year, we issued, um, a report on those people within the health system, nurses, or health providers in general, government, they actually do something about sexual and reproductive rights in a context where the issue of sexual and reproductive rights keeps being contested. You know, it's being contested in the U S Mexico is now quite liberal, but up to very recently, you know, a lot of contestation, and it's always a problem. You never know when it's going to happen that, women aren't going to be able to, you know, have a choice how to deal with their bodies. And so we issued a report in the hope that those, uh, health providers also saw themselves as, health providers that were issuing, uh, know, morning after pills or sexual health education that they saw themselves as human rights defenders as well, because I think that is something that we need to do because there are quite a lot of human rights defenders out there. It's just that we haven't, let them know, or they haven't realized that what they are actually doing is defending, human rights. And then if I go to, um, yes, there are quite a lot of, I don't want to, well, yes, maybe I should call them heroes. Although the word hero has become a slight problem because I think we have also contributed to the idea that these defenders are heroes and that there are a few of them and that there is only a few of them. That's the specific definition since 1998,when a specific declaration was sort uh, passed unanimously on protecting and promoting those people that, um, defend human rights. Interestingly enough, that declaration doesn't, doesn't mention the word human rights defenders. It's individuals, more or less, that take injustice personally. And then us in the human rights world, we start, we, we, we've always called them before the declaration and after that, we've always called them human rights defenders. but I think there is this idea that they all have to incredibly heroes and very, very courageous and that there are only a few. And there are more than that,but it is true you, when you sort of defend rights in particular contexts, you're a far more at risk and they are the first ones on the frontline. And there is an organization called frontline defenders that I'm sure you, you know about, and you've heard about that that was actually created precisely after the declaration on human rights defenders came, um, ado at the end of the 20th century. And they have been very in their annual reports and counting of the human rights defenders that they know about that are being killed. And it is, At least one a day that we all know of because there are still many places and many of those that we don't about. So we always say at least, and it's painful that that is still happening now.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 37:50
Yes, I am really inspired by the work the Frontline Defenders organization does and very similar to the programs that you run. And when I was reading Amnesty International's report that came out titled State of the World, and I was reading through the statistics and we'll talk about those. And I was just so curious because I know your team does their absolute best to try to

find concrete numbers and pull all the data, but, you know, representing 144 countries, there's no way you can get all the numbers accurate and you need to provide estimates. And I think about, like you said, some of the countries that's too dangerous to go in where very much, perpetrating atrocities to human rights defenders and we'll never know because we just don't have that access. The censorship is there. I was curious if you could walk through how you and your team lead the relief program and what does that relief look like?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 38:49
Thank you. Thank you for that question because it's a very program that Amnesty actually started also in the 60s. When Amnesty started and, you know, the small group of people together with Peter Benenson, who was the founder with others of Amnesty, very quickly Amnesty members realized that, okay, we are writing letters for prisoners of conscience to be released and not to be detained because of their ideas in particular at the very beginning. And Amnesty members realized that, well, if those people are in prison, who's actually helping their relatives outside? Are they these people, you know, the ones that sort of, the breadwinners, what is the family doing? What do they need? once they leave prison, when they were released, did they need some psychological support, some medical support? Did they need a lawyer as well? Were these people that had, and as we know everywhere in the world, when needing a lawyer, you know, means having the means for a lawyer, even if there is legal aid, you still need, because when we started this conversation, at the beginning of this recording, what did we say? You know, the privileged are the ones with the means of being able to do all of that. So the members, these members together and they decided that they were going to create a fund, to help, know, emergency fund, it was called at the time, just to help, know, with legal fees, medical fees. That's more or less how it started. Obviously, we're now here 60, almost 70 years later, the fund is now bigger, but we still mainly support, individuals at risk with legal aid, medical aid, psychological support, and relocation, because sometimes people have to relocate to prevent them being detained, to prevent them being killed. It's a small fund, we work very closely. As Amnesty, we're very lucky that we have offices in most places, that we have people doing research and campaigning in most countries in the world. so when we are doing a campaign in a particular part of the world or with a particular individual, then our researchers and our offices around the world say, actually, this particular individual hasn't got a lawyer, have read that we run the last five years a big global campaign on protests, protecting protests, and quite a lot of protesters in this new world order, you know, they're beaten. You know, in many countries, in Colombia in particular, you know, they're shooting, and quite a lot of people lost their eyes, so we supported them with medical assistance, you know, to have the operations they needed to, to be treated medically, and then quite a lot also goes to psychological support after what they've experienced. So that's how it works now. It's a very interesting one, and it complements, and it's another tool, it's another sort of campaigning tool, if you want, because, yes, putting pressure on people, Leaders around the world not to do X, Y, or Z, but people also need that immediate help, you know? Sometimes it takes decades for justice to come true, and sometimes what they need is actually some quick help to relocate or some help for them to be able to pay for a doctor. And it has to be for human rights violations they've experienced.

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:31
That's, that's fascinating, I Generally. the victims typically in most countries' criminal law system, get overlooked, there aren't ways, typically, of compensating the, the victim. the focus is principally on punishing the, perpetrator,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 42:51
Yes,

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:52
it's fascinating that the work you're doing with the, the victims, that's so important.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:57
It's so and I want to take a thread that you both spoke the vastness of being part of Amnesia National, and all of the work that is done, but it's all intersected, and that's why it would be hard sometimes, as you said, to do that, like, narrow window of two years. Because reproductive rights is connected to maternal health care, it's connected to overall gender rights. You know, I think about our community here in the United States, one of our most vulnerable communities is black trans women. know, they're up against racism, they're up against LGBTQIA they're the most murdered group in our country. So from the intersection, in the report that Amnesty put out, it documents that in the Americas, the most vulnerable defenders are women, Afro descendants, indigenous persons, and LGBTQIA plus persons. And, and they face intersecting forms of discrimination across the board. And Guadalupe, I was curious, what does intersectionality mean in practice for someone trying to defend human rights amongst these communities? And, and do you focus on all of them? How do you go about defining that and working toward that?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 44:12
Yes. So, intersectionality means accepting that the, depending on where you are and who you are, the violations that you suffer can be multi-layered. Okay. if you're a white woman, you suffer one kind of violation, you, if you're a woman and then you're black, you're also discriminated because of your color. If you're a woman and you're black and you live in poverty, then you're also discriminated because you haven't got any money. So that's the multi-layer of the intersectionality, that we're not just equal and it is key. And I'm very pleased that amnesty and the human rights world in general is embracing that because I do think that there was this idea that we're all equal, you know, and it's fine and we're going to treat people. We can't because it's not, I don't receive the same treatment in this city, then an person, an indigenous got, that hasn't got any income, that never went to school, that did not, it's just not the same. I have to admit that. And again, we go back to the privilege. So that's what intersectionality is, you know, acknowledging that. And then when you're working on this, what within amnesty, we need to sort of, well, number one, acknowledge that and make sure in our reports and in our campaign, that's explained and people understand it. Because I do think there's something about the legacy of colonialism that is precisely that at the moment, this, but the colonialism that we're all part of now. There's been other colonialism thousands of years ago, but the one we living in now is, you know, what happened in the 16th and 17th

century and when, where we are now. And so the legacy still is that those groups are still discriminated against the ones that, know, were slaves, the indigenous people in this country, you when the Spanish in this country, And then Latin America, when the Spanish came, they became, the rulers. So the legacy is still there now. The people that are most vulnerable in this, this country where I'm sitting now are the indigenous population. and we're talking now 500 years later and it's still the indigenous population. So the legacy is big. So we need to start acknowledging that and then realizing, and then the recommendations then are, well, we need to tackle that in order to sort of move on. And in order to then hopefully be all equal before the law, because at the moment we're not... in, in strict terms. much. So, discrimination works on a one-to-one level. So, those of us working in the human rights world, we pride ourselves that we're not sexist. We're not racist. Okay. We're not classist. So, we're not just... But what we have never worked on is the structural racism that we are part of. The structural sexism that we are part of. So, that is now... We now, at Amnesty, we have racial justice team. It was sort put in two years ago. And we are talking more and more about the structural racism and sexism. And patriarchy that we are very much part of. Even us that are, if you want, the goodies of this world. We are very much part of that and we have to acknowledge it and we want to work on it. It's the issue of being anti-racist. Not just not racist, but anti-racist. What do we all have to do in order to move into that space? Just not being racist is, yes, one step. But now we have to tackle the racism. And I'm just going to give you an example because we issued a report Schengen visas for human rights defenders. Schengen is this area in Europe and you need visas to go to some countries. Not all of them. So, hundred and so countries need visas to get into the Schengen Schengen area, 104, surprise, surprise, just get into the area for two or three days. Okay? So, we invite human rights defenders to go to Geneva, for example. And the issue of visas for those people that are part of the hundred and four countries that did visas is just extraordinary. sometimes amnesty members haven't received visas to get into Brussels or to get into Geneva. Why? Because they're young, because they're black, because they don't have an account, even though they have an amnesty letter. And that's a bit of a legacy of colonialism because the countries that are listed there are African countries, the countries in northern Africa as well, countries in Asia. So, it's part of that legacy that we need to. So, it's structural racism that is happening there and the legacy of that and we issued a report on not long ago in November as to how there needs to be some change as to, well, you pride yourself of supporting human rights The Schengen area has got really interesting and good guidelines to promote and protect human rights defenders. And then, when it comes to them talking for three minutes in Geneva. or talking for four minutes in Brussels, it's a bit complicated to get them a visa. So, it's those things where I think we just, as amnesty, and I think in general, as the human rights world, we are moving into aspects, which I think is key. amnesty has always been very good at the reactive work. It was all about reacting, right? How do we react to, this isn't about, oh, well, we didn't get into the prevention. It's just that, you know, reacting is already big enough. But I think we're moving now into reacting and then what are the root causes of the things that are happening out there and how do we change that or help change it? it as a movement?

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:08

So I take it that the justification for granting the visas is a concern the, uh, individual will want to in the country?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 50:19
Absolutely. That's one of them. Yes. Yes. But what is these, these individuals, when they are going to Geneva, they usually carry, carry a return ticket. They usually carry a letter from the amnesties of this world, from the frontline defenders of this world, for the, so many organizations that support people going to Geneva or going to Brussels. So, even with all of that, you know, the obstacles are big. Sometimes, for example, it's W you're young, many people don't have bank accounts. Okay. Maybe the parents are the ones that have the bank accounts. And there are more and more, we work more and more with young human rights defenders. So they have impossible to get them the visa because when do you need a bank account? And there are a lot of people that have them, in some countries, women are not allowed to have, you know, the, the, the husbands are the ones that have the bank account. So how do we overcome that? So the report is precisely about those experiences of people know, they are supported by the human rights world. Sometimes they're even invited by the Geneva system, the, the, the UN system in Geneva, and they still can. So there, there are contradictions as to how it were. And the main contradiction is that consulates around the world and those that issue the visas have, haven't been trained, haven't been told, haven't been, so might be following the rules very well. No, you need the bank account, you need this, you need that. So they're not, if you want, doing it on purpose, but the system is doing it on purpose. So what do we need in order to sort of avoid that? So recently the visa code was altered within, in, in, in the commission, in the European commission, they're opening up now a bit more, who are human rights defenders? What do they need? Why it would be important to look at it slightly different, but yes, one of the reasons you put your finger in it, they're going to stay and we don't want any more migrants. In our shores, as you know, that's a big topic at the moment in Europe and in other countries.

BERT LOCKWOOD 52:25
what you're doing is so important behind it is the notion of bureaucracy and if you can get the rule change, then it works in your favor.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 52:36
Absolutely. then it works in our favor, but it also then, the pushing of, because sometimes to be fair to, t governments, sometimes to be, they do issue the right legislation or the right change, but then it's not trickled down. And, you know, there is a lot that has to be trickled down, which then takes me back again to, to amnesty and legislation and all the UN system, which is fine, but then isn't trickled down to, you know, people really implementing and understanding So it stays out there. And then what do we need to do to make sure that governments and localities actually understand it and implement it?

BERT LOCKWOOD 53:21
There's an interesting, analogous situation, that occurred with, the human human rights reports that the U S state department did each country. That came about, not because the

executive branch of our government wanted it In. fact The state department didn't want it. It was forced upon them by Congress. and there was a Congressman named Fraser from, uh, Minneapolis who passed the legislation that required them to create within the state department, a human rights bureau. It was the first one in the world. State departments didn't have it. then required them to report initially on countries that were receiving USAID, what their human rights records were. And then it eventually expanded suddenly other Western human rights, foreign ministries adopted the same thing. They created within their foreign ministries, these bureaucracies. And I had one of my graduates, who went into the foreign service. And when she was stationed in Ethiopia, one of her responsibilities was doing this report daily following what human rights abuses were going on in Ethiopia. she had to fill out, it was a form that she had to fill out to keep track of, that then got sent back to the State Department. Yeah, including in their that was part of the genius of getting into the bureaucracy, uh, because what it meant was your foreign ministry had keep track of the human rights situation in the country.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:13
Yes. I know exactly what you mean. And then I think those U. reports from the State Department, they were actually pretty good. I mean, we used them quite a lot, you know. Even the U. S. State Department is saying that in Peru. And it did work.

BERT LOCKWOOD 55:28
yeah, initially, Human Rights Watch Human Rights First did shadow reports. But then they discovered that

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:37
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 55:37
these were accurate, pretty accurate. So they, they, they didn't do

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:42
Absolutely.

BERT LOCKWOOD 55:42
it.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:43
Absolutely.

BERT LOCKWOOD 55:43
You'll, you'll be interested to know Trump just announced that they're no longer going to do

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:48
No,

BERT LOCKWOOD 55:48
the,

GUADALUPE MARENGO 55:49
I, I know, No, USAID, no State Department reports, which is, which is a pity. But I do remember when I started working on Peru. So Fujimori was the then, uh, president. And I don't know whether you, you know, or the audience knows, but, there was a armed opposition group in Peru, the Maoist and the one supporting Cuba, two armed opposition. But the Maoist were violent. in Peru. before Fujimori, the killings just were, I mean, Alan Garcia, who was president, I mean, he was just getting into villages with the tanks, tanks, never mind whether it was or whether it wasn't Sendero Luminoso, Shining Path, that was the a group there, Maoists they were. And when Fujimori came, Fujimori was told by the U. S., it's so clear, you stop the killings or no more money. And the killings stopped from one day, it was almost from one day. We used to get 300 killings and disappearances, killings and disappearances at the same time because sometimes bodies were never found. And from one day to the next, the disappearances and the killings stopped. What then Fujimori did was put them all in prison. this is all, know, because of those reports. I mean, people were homework. And I know one can be cynical and say, well, if it was convenient and they said it to some but not to others. Yes, all of that is true. But, you know, when it worked, it worked. O at least there was some change.

BERT LOCKWOOD 57:21
it also got used often in asylum claims. know in Canada, they would often rely on the U. S. reports.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 57:30
And to keep us in Peru, one theme of human rights defenders that I am deeply passionate about is the defenders of the Amazon and environmental justice, because we can't have human rights without a healthy planet. I mean, talk about intersection. People and planet go hand in hand. And, one of the areas where the crisis facing defenders is the protection of land, forest, ecosystems across Latin America and the global south. In Peru, for from Amnesty's report, it states that four land and territory and environmental offenders were killed in 2024, three of them being indigenous leaders. environmental defenders are constantly being attacked and murdered because they're protecting their land. And not even just their land, but their roots and their ancestral forests and the rivers. And the communities that also survive on those. We're seeing what these mining companies and these companies are doing. Guadalupe, could you go into what is driving the violence and why these brave human rights defenders are trying to protect their land? And really, they only have their voice and their body as, a force against these injustices.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 58:51
I think what is Meredith, is that obviously the issue of our planet is now, you in most people's minds, I would say, or in more people's minds than when I was a child in the 60s, just thinking about, you know, injustice in a different way. I wasn't thinking the environment at the time,

you know. And I'm sure we were using in the 60s beginning to use plastic like hell. But as we move on in us now, this is a key aspect of where we all are. And, you know, the environment, our healthy environment is a human right. Okay, that is now the United Nations and in most people's minds, apart a people that negate that the planet in trouble. I think what is then happening is that those people who have always defended, know, our planet, their land, living in a clean environment, know, having, you know, clean water to drink from rivers. They are now on strong attack. And if you look at the figures, it is one of the highest numbers of defenders, those that defend the environment that are being attacked in the last few years. my explanation is that it has to do because we are really fighting strong, know, to make changes, to make changes into how we've treated the as humanity, all of us, all of us together, you know, and those particular groups, indigenous groups, those that work very closely to the land, not those that live like me in these big cities, they are the ones that have always been there. And now they are More empowered, or maybe empowered, even not more, but empowered, and they are far more on the front line, and that's why those that see that their businesses might collapse, because we need to organize differently, we need to using fossil fuels, and we are going to now change into something else, that particular group must be on, feeling on the threat, and that's how you then sort of threaten those particular groups. So, I think that's precisely what's happening, and they are one, within Latin America, it's the highest group, and also in the Philippines, and in other bits of Asia, they're being attacked, um, systematically.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:01:18
The Philippines as well?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:01:19
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:01:20
Wow. And if I may, I would love to highlight an incredibly inspiring human rights defender, was 14 years old at the that she took the Ecuadorian government to court. she's a climate activist, and her name is Leonela Moncao. Am I saying that correct, Guadalupe?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:01:39
Yes, Moncao,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:01:40
to give a little bit more context into her fight to preserve the Amazon in her country, she, amongst her friends, eight girls in total, decided to go up against the Ecuadorian government to sue them over gas flaring, and they actually won this landmark court ruling. what ended up happening on February 2024, there was an improvised explosive device that detonated outside Leonela's home, five days after she confronted the Ecuador's energy minister in the National Assembly. And the Ecuadorian authorities conditioned her protection, saying she had to stop her activism. she decided not to do so, and she with her friends, the group called the Warriors for the Amazon. And she's quoted, Amnesty a head of the COP30, she says, we were

girls, not experts, but we had the strongest thing, the truth. No one can silence us or force us to keep our mouths shut in the face of injustice. that's just the most

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:02:48
It's beautiful, and it takes us back to the definition of who are human rights defenders, you know. It's a 14-year-old that realizes, that something is wrong within her community, okay, and brings others in and say, we need to do something about it, because this is being destroyed with a different sort of oil that is being extracted in that particular region the Amazon, in the Ecuadorian And it's getting together and saying, no, we're going to take this personally, and we're going to do something about it. This is actually incredibly inspiring. I so agree with you. And like here, there are so many others. And those are the ones that, as we said at the beginning, no, they're not the professional people. It's just anybody that takes injustice personally and does something about it.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:03:38
And I wanted to highlight since you're taking your call from ExoCity, in 2023, Mexico Amnesty's report states that 15 land defenders and environmental activists were killed, making Mexico one of the most dangerous countries in the world for territory, land, and environmental defenders. And also, an organization called Global Witness has documented over 2,200 environmental defenders killed or missing from 2012 to 2024. So, you know, it just feels like we're going backwards in time. And that's why the work of Amnesty International to protect and highlight the work of these human rights defenders is so imperative, more than ever, because we are in a state of crisis.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:04:30
We definitely are, although it seems as if we're going back in time, I think also more and more people are joining us in, fighting this fight, okay, and in realizing, you know, what is really going on. I think it's more difficult . to hide in this new world. I think when, when I, sometimes people say to me, oh, well, but it used to be so much better when we were young. And I said, not really, not really. It was, it wasn't transparent. The elite really just got hold of everything and nobody knew exactly what was going on. Quite a big chunk of the population, you know, I think my family couldn't afford the Encyclopedia Britannica, for example. And we were quite sort of in the middle. So now with a little bit, I know you might be in the wrong algorithm, but you can still find, you know, it's more difficult to hide at the moment. So I think that is also important to acknowledge that a few things, solidarity, I think is big. And that's why amnesty isn't the only one. It used to be the only one. And now, you know, the whole, you know, there are so many other groups fighting the fight for, living in a world where no, none of the human rights violations. That we know of are committed. So I I am hopeful that we're moving in in a better direction or in the right direction. Although sometimes, of course, it looks as if we aren't with what we see in certain parts of the world. Or the rhetoric that is happening in certain parts of the world.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:04

Oh, absolutely. And I'm so glad brought that up about being able to witness and that you can't hide. And technology has been a functional tool in not allowing those perpetrators to hide. Because with our phones, we have cameras, we have videos, we can record. And it also allows these activists to share their stories and their work.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:06:28
Exactly.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:29
Around the whole world. And when you were saying that, I was thinking of the wonderful nonprofit Rainforest Alliance. And they are the guardians of the forest and advocates for farmers. And they do wonderful storytelling marketing, where sometimes I feel I'm transported to Latin America, to the different regions. And I get to hear from these farmers and these activists that are boots on the ground.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:06:51
Totally. And there is far more inter-connections between those that work in the Amazon work in Alaska or those that work in Cambodia. I do think it's quite interesting how people are gaining force by sort of talking to each other in different communities, which I think is key as well.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:07:13
And if I may, I want to transport us from the Amazon to Afghanistan. I would love to highlight fight that incredible women human rights defenders are doing. And Guadalupe, in your article that you wrote last year titled, Why Protecting Human Rights Defenders Must Be a Priority for Us All. And for our listeners, that will be linked in our show notes. You open with the story of Zolia Parsi, a woman whose name our listeners may recognize from actually a conversation we had with Hans Thulin, because Zolia was the 2024 Martin Ennels Award Laureate. And I was curious if you would be able to share her story with our listeners.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:07:58
Yes, did quite a lot of work on Afghanistan. We've been doing quite a lot of work on Afghanistan throughout the years, you know, but it was very unfortunate when, you know, the troops, the U. S. pulled out and the Taliban took over so, so quickly. And how the country has deteriorated very badly and how Amnesty supported quite a lot of people to leave, you know, through the relief program, for example. We helped them to, know, cross the border, border Pakistan in particular. And then those that stayed, we helped them, you know, we've been, and we still do, helped them to sort of reorganize, relocate, get. And it's the women human rights defenders that have, well, the worst scenario, because the Taliban are so strict about what women and girls can and can't do. And, they've gone so far as to no more school. At the beginning, it looked as if maybe they weren't going to be as strict as they had they were ruling previously, but they've gone now down that line. And difficult to envisage what it's like to be a woman, human rights defender, or a woman in general in a country Afghanistan, when you need male, eh, support for everything. And if you happen to be in, in a family where there are

males around, either because you have no brothers or because your dad died or because your uncles don't want to know, you end up in a very, um, difficult situation. Only recently, eh, we've a small podcast because my team also issues podcasts a bit like this one. It's called On the Side of Humanity. And in the late, in one of the latest episodes, a woman that is actually trying in hiding to teach women and girls online so that they don't lose, you know, a particular aspect. So quite a lot of, wo are actually organizing, but it's supposed to be very difficult to organize in that sort of a particular environment.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:04
mm-hmm. And, something that's happening here in the United States that is, really horrifying and, and, and alarming is hundreds of Afghans who were provided refuge here in the, in America because they worked with our military. As translators, and in other positions is is trying to threaten them with deportation to the DRC.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:10:30
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:31
there's been articles written that the deportation and threat of going to the DRC may actually have some of these Afghans just decide to return to Taliban, which Trump may actually want. But they are at great peril to be killed and tortured by the Taliban. So I think it's just really important that we continue to speak up against the Taliban, what they're doing to the women and the young girls and their and also the men who want, education and access for women, for their wives, their partners, their daughters, et cetera. And also what we're seeing around the world, to Afghans. Because sometimes I just don't think we, we see enough on the, the global media at the moment because many, many things are happening.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:11:18
is, it is, it is really unfortunate, uh, Meredith, how the issue of, uh, migrants has become such a, a difficult issue for all of us. And everybody is then put in that same category, you um, refugee status and people that have to move to another, another country, either because they haven't got a job or whatever. So it's all, it's all, it's very sad that suddenly that has become everywhere in the, in the global minority, a key, key aspect of will, how they suggest we organize ourselves, you know, within the next decade. that, I'm hoping that it won't happen, but just the way it's looking out, it's the same thing Europe. It's not only in the US, you know, it's finding who to blame for what is happening, you know, the scapegoats of what is happening in a particular, in a particular locality. I'm hoping that know, those particular countries can get out of that, t this isn't about blaming a particular group. It's about seeing how we can organize ourselves better so that everybody has, you know, all their, human rights respected because it is sort of putting one community against another. And it very much feels as if that particular, particular rhetoric is winning. I'm hoping it won't, but it sometimes feels, and I can totally understand as well scapegoating is the easy way, it's the easy way out. And this isn't about scapegoating. This is about, if we all have our rights respected, we don't need to use scapegoating. How do, and it gets us back to the 1%. So how are we distributing our

resources? Why have some people so much and others nothing? What, what is happening? We need to sort of keep questioning that aspect. Because my suggestion is that there is enough for everyone. But I do think there's something about we need to start talking root causes and where things are going, because otherwise it's just too much of the reactive, you know, make sure this person isn't detained, make sure this person has house, make sure this person has a health service. Yes, but I think we need to be stronger in, you know, societies have to organize themselves in certain things. And I think we were shy about that because we thought that was political, political with a capital P. It's not political with a capital P, it's political with a small p. You know, we have to question those I think.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:13:55
you know, Guadalupe, I'd like to share with our listeners, um, the Human Rights Defenders Memorial, which is a nonprofit and a website that was started in 2016, that just shares the stories of human rights defenders that have The Human Rights Defenders Memorial, which is a non-profit and a website that was started in 2016 that just shares the stories of human rights defenders that have been killed all over the world. And it's incredibly somber and humbling, but they also do a beautiful job of celebrating the lives that we've lost. And I just encourage our listeners to take a moment after listening to our episode and just reading some of these inspiring stories. And Guadalupe, for our wonderful listeners, I know that they are going to be very moved by our discussion today, and I know that they'd love to know how they can, A, support Amnesty International's work, as well as stand in solidarity with defenders, particularly the programs you work on. Could you share some advice for them?

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:14:47
Definitely. Thank you, Meredith. I will definitely share some. So we have, have an Instagram and we also a, an X account where you can follow my team that um, human rights defenders, and you'll find the links to our reports and to the actions that you can take. We'll also share the Amnesty web joining the actions that Amnesty is doing. But I encourage people, you know, just in general to look into, know, injustices around them, you know, and try and see who around, who in their communities, because sometimes more effective or it feels closer to one when you look around you and you see where injustices are happening and then you join the local, groups or solidarity groups that are, that are working on this. But we'll share with you our reports and our links for you to take action also at the global through, through Amnesty.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:15:43
And wonderful.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:15:44
Thank you so much.

GUADALUPE MARENGO 1:15:45
Thank you so Thank you so much. It's been really, really lovely talking to you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:15:54

I want to thank Guadalupe for the care and compassion she brings to her work every day at Amnesty International. throughout our conversation, I shared statistics from human rights reports. And I want to highlight that every statistic I shared is an actual person who made a choice to stand for what is right in this world, often at extraordinary personal cost. If you would like to support the work of Amnesty International Human Rights Defenders program, you can follow them on social media. And if you're in a position to do so, consider making a donation. Links are in the show notes. if you are as inspired by today's conversation as I am, please share it with your community. And if you're not yet subscribed to human rights conversations across generations, we hope you will click that subscribe button. A rating and a review on Apple podcast and Spotify helps us reach new listeners. Thank you for listening and for caring about the work of human rights defenders until next time.