

Human Rights – Conversations Across Generations

Episode: Julie Leftwich

Original Release: March 2026

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04

Hi, welcome to our podcast, Huma 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 0:27

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.

I'm so excited to introduce you to our guest today, Julie Leftwich. She is an international human rights and the director of international peace and security initiatives at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. She's also a graduate of the University of Cincinnati Law School and was part of the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights, who studied under my dad. Julie has advised international institutions, governments, security sector actors, and civil society organizations on right-based approaches to security, peace, and democratic governance with a particular focus on women's rights, accountability, and the rule of law. She is the founder and former executive director of the immigrant and refugee law center, where she led legal advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war zones, as well as gender-based violence.

In our discussion, Julie spoke with honesty and courage about what it means to be a human rights and immigration lawyer as well as a peace builder in this moment. I hope this conversation can inspire you to use your voice to fight for justice and equality for all. Let's jump into the conversation now.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:36

I always start off. a bit of a personal touch. It's a bit of a personal touch. Yeah. Okay. And it's always really exciting when we have a fellow Cincinnati. obviously you're deeply connected to my dad at University of Cincinnati Law, student, So, let's of talk Cincinnati and roots. um, so Julie, I have to ask you the most

JULIE LEFTWICH 2:55

where

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:55

cliche

JULIE LEFTWICH 2:55

did I go

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:56

question

JULIE LEFTWICH 2:56

school?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:56

of Cincinnati. Yes.

JULIE LEFTWICH 2:59

Walnut Hills.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:00

And Walnut

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:03

So did

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:03

Hills.

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:03

my mom. Oh,

So he didn't go

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:07
wow.

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:07
to Walnut.

Yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:11
So, so your mom is also from Cincinnati. So in a way, including mom in this conversation, since our theme of this podcast is multi-generational, we technically have three generations of Walnut Hills alum. I love Yeah. So I'm very, very proud of Walnut Hills. Um, and last fall

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:29
Oh

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:29
to go

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:29
yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:30
back for my 20th high

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:30
I

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:31
school

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:31
haven't

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:31
reunion.

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:31
been, I don't know when was the last time I was back there. It's changed.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:37

Well, from 2004, when I graduated, it, has become absolutely incredible from the expansion of the school. I couldn't believe like this new pool complex they have They like a news reporting room

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:51

Someday,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:51

where like students

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:52

someday I'll get

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:52

are

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:53

back

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:53

news

JULIE LEFTWICH 3:53

there.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:53

anchors.

Yeah. I have to shout out our Walnut Hill students. Um, and hopefully maybe some are listening. They just did a walkout, to denounce and over 400 Walnut Hill students walked out this

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:07

Oh, I didn't

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:07

past

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:07

know

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:07

week

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:07
that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:07
and they

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:08
That's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:08
got on the

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:08
great.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:08
local

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:08
Good.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:09
news. Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:11
I didn't either.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:13
So very proud of Walnut. and

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:15
So I grew

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:15
where

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:15
up

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:15
did

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:15
in

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:15
you grow

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:16
Amberley.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:16
up in the

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:18
Yeah. Yeah. And so talking about

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:20
near

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:20
multi-generational.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:20
campus.

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:20
So my father was also, um, he spent his career at UC as faculty in the econ department. So I grew up around UC as well.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:31
what drew you to go to Cincinnati for law school?

JULIE LEFTWICH 4:34
actually the number one thing is that I, it, I didn't have to pay tuition because my, I was, was faculty, but you know, it actually worked out really well. I didn't, cause it was the only place I applied. Cause I thought, well, if I'm going, I was completely content to go to law school.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:53
you were sort fortunate because they changed geez, about 10, 15 years ago that you can no longer, uh, for medical

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:02
Oh,

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:02
or law

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:02

wow.

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:02

school,

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:02

No,

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:03

get

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:03

that's,

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:03

the,

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:03

yeah, that was a, tha was a

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:04

tuition.

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:04

huge but it worked out well because even like, it was actually after I even applied and got in, you know, it was later that I learned about, um, Urban Morgan. So it, you know, I knew I wanted to do human rights work. So I remember I was, uh, working in DC and I remember being in my office and having a conversation with Al Watson, who was the, I guess the, the assistant dean for

Right. And he was telling me about, I

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:29

admissions.

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:29

think I was still debating whether I wanted to, you know, do I remember him telling me about Urban Morgan. I said, well, perfect. So I can go to, I can go law school and not pay tuition and study human rights. So it was, great.

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:45

Well, I think I, I think I heard something where you, um, had made decided efforts to, not come back to

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:52

I kind

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:52

Cincinnati, but

JULIE LEFTWICH 5:56

I had applied my senior year of college and I was at Brandeis in Um, and I came back during spring break and I remember my brother was in medical school and I, and, and my sister and my now sister-in-law, was here as well too. And I remember sitting on the front porch with her at their house and just freaking out. I was like, I don't want to be in Cincinnati and I don't want to go to law school.

So I'm more in Europe and then I moved to DC I actually ended up working for an immigration attorney just because of skills. Um, and that's what, you know, made me realize that I could do something good with, with the law degree. So

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:37

well, and, and that immigration theme, I in some ways the, the concerning and development that we're facing. Uh, clearly have been involved, but I mean, your, innovation in creating immigrant and refugee law I think really was sort of a landmark achievement. And I'm curious in, you know, I know you were located at Roberts Academy, which as I recall, is a school where I think something like 80% or, uh, so, of the students, English is a second language. I'm you would have insight into what families are, going through. And I, I wonder if there is story of someone that you came in contact with that of illustrates the kinds of, issues and pressures

JULIE LEFTWICH 7:29

yeah. And that's

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:29

immigrant

JULIE LEFTWICH 7:30

actually why, as

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:30

families

JULIE LEFTWICH 7:30

you,

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:30

are

JULIE LEFTWICH 7:30

as you

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:31

facing.

JULIE LEFTWICH 7:31

mentioned, Roberts Academy, that's actually why we started the immigrant refugee law center. Because when I came back to Cincinnati, I've been living in DC and doing the international work. When I came back to Cincinnati in 2017, that'd be, there'd been such an uptick in refugee families in the area. And they'd really been identifying at the schools, and especially Roberts Academy, which had grown, um, so much in its international population. And so. We opened the doors of the immigrant refugee law center in, in an office in Roberts Academy. And I think, you know, so impactful. Um, I remember principal of Roberts at the time. He was talking about how, after the.

As a presidential election, the presidential election, the day after, more than half of the kids did not come to school because they were just so scared because just, you know, during the campaign, there had been such terrible rhetoric. and that was, you know, 2016. So here we are years that was a really sad story, obviously, but then they had miserable impact with the Immigrant and Refugee Law Center being there you know, the families more stable, attendance went up, uh, then more parent parental involvement, um, just kind of knowing that there were, uh, attorneys there and people to feel a um, safer. So, I think right now that's probably amplified tenfold, um, just in terms of, of the fear and, really no place is safe anymore. It used to be that the school was safe, but they, they aren't. And we know that they'll take kids. I mean, you know, I've worked with families where the, the children were separated under the, you know, the family separation policies under the previous administration. but, you know, we, we have, we've heard stories in the news lately of children being taken, I mean, on their own from, know, not at the border, right. They're being taken away from their homes. I think we've all heard of the recent case of the five-year-old boy that was detained and just, it's, it's, it's heartbreaking. I can barely even, hear those stories now, just knowing kids are going through, what parents are going through it's heartbreaking.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:37

and on one hand, I sort of how can they be sort of tone deaf to know that that kind of situation isn't going to play with all sorts of Americans who, you know, may have different degrees with respect to the immigration issue. but on the other hand, sort of think the cruelty may be part the message that they're wanting to get across. uh, Stephen Miller, that I think he's largely calling the shots and I think

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:09

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:10
that's,

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:10
I mean,

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:10
a

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:10
I think

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:11
message

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:11
that

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:11
that he's

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:11
he and,

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:12
comfortable

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:12
and many of

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:12
with.

JULIE LEFTWICH 10:12
the other, other folks in the administration are very open about saying that. I mean, I, I remember under the previous Trump administration, when I was at RLC, it was just, I mean, I think one of the stated, uh, objectives of their strategy is to wear everybody down, to wear lawyers down advocates, you know, immigrants, because there was just, uh, you know, the constant, uh, immigration is, is, you know, a difficult area to practice in always, but there was just, know, constant changes in policies, hat rhetoric. I just, you know, everybody was scrambling. I remember, during COVID when, when we had the shutdown and we had to have our staff meetings virtually, there were times that I would get off the call and literally just, you know, start crying and just, I had to go meditate for a while because it was just so awful. So, I mean, I think that's definitely part of the strategy. And, Bert, you said they're, they're tone

deaf. they are because most people that I've heard lately, even if they, you know, agree with tougher, um, immigration enforcement, and tougher policies are not, do not agree with the cruelty that, that is happening now, but doesn't seem to matter.

BERT LOCKWOOD 11:26

Yeah. I'd say historically, um, the people attracted to the, human rights program at Cincinnati probably about 25% of them sort of know they want to do something in human rights, but they know that they're going to stay in the U um, and, and they tend toward immigration, which is a very specialized, area of the law. I think it's fairly rare that immigration lawyers do other practice.

that, that's been a long time, focus of the, uh, the human rights program and, and the people that are attracted to it. as you say, it's, uh, become particularly, uh, important, at this moment in society with, the

JULIE LEFTWICH 12:14

yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 12:14

number version of Trump.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 12:17

Well, and Julie, something that I really connected with you that were passionate about going into law school in your early days of your career was focusing on demystifying complex human rights laws for broader audiences. And that's where themes of this podcast and why we started it. Having grown up with my dad, who is a global human rights lawyer and professor, I've just had a very privileged window into those complexities, but I am not a lawyer, did not go to law school. So I've always just had on speed dial my dad. in the news. When I can question something, I can ask him, how is this happening? It's unconstitutional. And I. My dad and I ever predicted to have such conversations in 2025 and 2026 that we have because federal agents, political leaders are not following the constitution. And I find it incredibly frustrating that they defy judicial orders because it does feel lawless. Can I ask you, yes. And from your esteemed background in immigration law, can you speak to how immigration crackdown is happening? And maybe to like everyday citizens where we are taking to the streets, we are protesting, and we do know that certain federal agents and political leaders are not following orders that judges have ruled on to

JULIE LEFTWICH 13:51

Yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 13:51

protect

JULIE LEFTWICH 13:51

it's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 13:52

citizens and immigrants.

JULIE LEFTWICH 13:54

a tough question because, you know, I think we've seen over the past eight years under the first administration, there was a true erosion of the rule of law. You know, you know, our institutions are strong you know, to withhold this, they're no longer as strong as they were because they were, you know, four years of them being eroded and the rule of law being eroded, and then four years to really prepare for this onslaught that we've seen the past year. And I've been saying for a long time now, I mean, obviously a lot of my career has been spent working internationally and in conflict-affected countries where there's serious human rights abuses and working on things like conflict-related sexual violence. yo know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you're in places where there's, you know, there's not freedom, there are authoritarian regimes. And just the kind of sliding we've seen in our country in the past eight years, I found more and more I started talking about things here that I would talk about in other countries. And like you said, we never, never thought we'd be having these, these conversations here. I am heartened just to see the people now. I mean, I the way that people are really protesting and coming out, and I think there's a sustained effort. I mean, you're in Portland, so, so, you know, than we do. think, so, know, even

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 15:20

Oh,

JULIE LEFTWICH 15:20

though it does

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 15:21

very

JULIE LEFTWICH 15:21

feel in many

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 15:21

much.

JULIE LEFTWICH 15:21

ways like our institutions are not functioning. I some of the courts, I mean, I think it's certainly in the first administration, but now the courts were at least, doing their job know, safeguarding the rule of law. I won't say that all of them doing that now, know, some are still playing their so it's not completely destroyed. I mean, I think they were still able to have hope think people are really seeing the consequences of what is happening. I think people, you know, I think there are kind of a couple of different things going on. One was there's the absolute outrage of the

cruelty of the immigration crackdown. but then there's just that, you know, the things in, in, in everybody's daily lives. I mean, it's human rights advocates. We know that not everybody is necessarily thinking about human rights and those kinds of, what they think are bigger picture things, even though to us, those are like, you everyday things. but, you know, people feeling it in their wallets. The economy is not improving. People are suffering. Um, people have been losing jobs. so I think, it's almost like People have to suffer in order for things to get better. Right. And it's almost like we needed to hit rock bottom, um, in order to hopefully, call ourselves up. But, you know, I think too, there's so many, there are people in the legal profession too, just really standing up, and talking about the rule of law and how dangerous this moment is. you know, at the same time, I mean, we've seen law firms and some folks in the legal profession really kind of roll over and give in, but I think so many people are really standing up. I saw recently, uh, uh, petit or statement that was put out by a group in Cleveland, actually calling on all Ohioans to, kind of come out, take a stand against what's happening and for the rule of law. there's still strength, I think, in the people.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:06

I very much believe that. And I do hope for Ohio that we can have Sherrod Brown back. We, we need his expertise and his guidance. Um, and, you know, something that I thought was very disheartening and really telling of where our society is, is Renee Good, who we lost in Minneapolis. her brothers testified, this past week, and not a single Republican came to their hearing. I, I feel like we've really lost a sense of bipartisanship.

JULIE LEFTWICH 17:36

Yeah .

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:36

I look back to the days of John McCain, We've just become so polarized," um, and- I do think we need to build more bridges, but we need more unified leadership across the aisle.

JULIE LEFTWICH 17:47

Yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:47

and we're lacking

JULIE LEFTWICH 17:48

I

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:48

that right

JULIE LEFTWICH 17:48

think it's been a

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:49

now.

JULIE LEFTWICH 17:49

long time coming now where it just has become, we're not being you know, everybody's there. uh, be in power, stay in power, keep their and they're there to just kind of fight the other side and obstruct the other side. And bipartisan ship. I mean, ironically, there issues like women, peace and security and the women, peace and security act that happened bipartisan. Um, but yeah, just seems like the leaders are there to just, keep their jobs, fight each other, obstruct each other. You know, it's like compromise and working across the those are those are a bad words now. and it is, it is sad because there was a time where, and, even if you didn't agree, even if you identify as a Republican or a Democrat, you could respect people and you could respect opinions on the other Um, and, you know, one of challenges, I'd say the past year has been to really try to kind of make that reach, right. I remember, um, last summer, I think it was during the election, you know, during campaigns and reading, you know, I saw a headline, in one of the newspapers about why young white men are feeling disaffected. And I was like, really? Uh, but I thought to myself, you know what? I was just angry.

To myself, okay. We're in another country doing work. It's very easy in those contexts to say, okay, we, you know, we have, we have to talk to each other. We have to understand where people are coming from. You know, we're never going to solve the problem if we don't. and I thought, okay, if I do that in other country, I'm a peace builder, I need to try to do that here as painful is, you know, and I made myself read that article mean, again, as, as, as frustrated as we get, if we don't understand where people are coming from, we're not, never going to actually solve problems. We're just going to keep putting band-aids on and everything festers underneath. So, I've challenging myself to do that too here.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 19:55

And, you know, I got to experience that the past couple months, over the holidays, my family and I, we went to London holidays. And around November, December last year, I was talking to friends in England and also in the Netherlands, because I was really curious from a global perspective, if they understood the gravity of what it's like to be an American progressive protester on the street. And if they realized the danger we do actually face that those agents do have guns and they will use guns. And this is before the current protests. I'm going back to 2020, black lives matter, et cetera. And, and I said this from a white woman's perspective. And I said like, do you know that when we go out, we do know that there is a chance that like violence could erupt and we're not safe from these federal agents. And they didn't really grasp that. They're like, they would actually openly shoot. And I was like, yes, they would. And they're like actual bullets versus like tear gas canisters. And I'm like both. And I think that that a good reckoning moment for my global friends. And then coming back to the United States, we saw what happened with Renee Good and Alex Preti like many others that we've lost. And I got so many messages of like, you, you were not kidding. And I was like, no, I wasn't. But for me, I saw that firsthand here in Portland, Oregon in 2020, going down to our justice center, where Trump did deploy the federal agents. We had some of the first federal agents deployed in

America during his presidency. And the federal agents, I had a gun pointed in my face. We had a white woman chain. We called it. It was like for moms and aunties to protect black and brown protesters. And I'm not going to lie. Back then in 2020, I really thought that white privilege would be a safety barrier. I was very wrong. I looked at those agents and They, it did not matter who you were. They just

JULIE LEFTWICH 21:57

Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 21:57

didn't like what side we were on. They didn't like what we were sticking up for. And, you know, a lot of them are gun enthusiasts, which we've seen now happen with Alex Preti, the two men who killed him, are Border Patrol gun enthusiasts. And I've seen a lot of discourse right now from certain white Americans, maybe more moderate, maybe haven't really been at a protest, but I've been watching the news now. And they're like, white people are

JULIE LEFTWICH 22:22

Right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 22:22

getting

JULIE LEFTWICH 22:23

That'll

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 22:23

shot.

JULIE LEFTWICH 22:23

wake people

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 22:23

It's

JULIE LEFTWICH 22:23

up.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 22:24

really surprising to them. Right. Yeah. And I've, I've already figured this out five, six years ago, but I've been trying to be silent and take it in and listen to like what broader people are experiencing right now. Because yes, I was like a little early to what's going on because of the city I live in and my ability to go out to the streets and protest. So I do agree with you that like, we do have to read articles that might be discomfort. We disagree with, a dear friend of mine watches Fox morning news and I tell her that every day

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:00

too?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:00

I'm

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:00

I

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:00

like, can

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:01

can't,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:01

you give me the cliff notes I can't, I ask her, I'm like, just Cliff-Note-it for me. Like send me a voice note. Um, I'm, I'm not at that level, but I do appreciate people who are, because we need to have these conversations. We need to understand the,

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:15

Yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:15

the polar divide going on in this

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:17

absolutely. And,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:17

country.

JULIE LEFTWICH 23:18

you know, I have know, advocacy work. I think there's, I say it's kind of like, three pieces of the pie. there's the, people that are already on your side. There are people who will never be on your side. And there are a lot of people in the middle that just don't know. And that's, you know, that's who you're aiming for people that, you know, sometimes they just need to be educated or they need better information. And then they'll have those aha moments. I know, something that, really struck me and maybe last year, it wasn't, it wasn't too long ago. I had written an op-ed for in the Cincinnati Enquirer. It was, it was asylum. I think it was, it was, it was still under the Biden administration. Has been, a change in policy to make it, you know, much more difficult for asylum seekers. I was talking about what the law actually says, both international law and U. S. law, and I remember, um, somebody I know who's, who's a judge,

she, she reached out and she said, you know, some of her, she had, she had been hearing from some of her, you know, conservative friends who, had read that and said, wow, and it was just, you know, that, that's who, that's who you want to target, right, the people just, just don't know, I mean, there are a lot of people out there, it's just how, how do you, how do you get to them and how do we, reach across and I think there's a lot of fear too, you know, I talk about gun last year we um, walking in the neighborhood and, some guy just kind of, yelled out from his driveway and I could tell he had been talking to a woman, of kept her on the sidewalk, and was talking with her said something to us and, he started talking about how, I think he had a Trump flag on his house or something, he was saying how, you know, people were angry and, at him and he started saying, well, that's my king and I thought, we just need to keep walking because

Mm-hmm. And, and how, you know, how crazy might get it's sad that we are feeling this kind of fear in our country. Again, that's something you see in other countries, um, but not here. And, one of important parts of my work in peacebuilding is very much telling the stories of people on the ground and, you peacebuilders in other countries, because you don't usually hear that. You hear all the, the war and the violence and the conflict and hate and not a whole lot of the good things that are going And so I'd like to amplify those voices, but I think this is also a moment for us to learn from, people in other countries who have actually experienced these things and experienced authoritarian regimes and, know, and face violence, but find ways to, to resist.

BERT LOCKWOOD 25:51

if you could live anywhere in the and you didn't have to worry the

JULIE LEFTWICH 25:55

Spain.

BERT LOCKWOOD 25:55

economic um, where would you live?

JULIE LEFTWICH 25:57

Spain? Yeah, I did live in Spain. I lived

BERT LOCKWOOD 25:59

Spain.

JULIE LEFTWICH 25:59

in Spain years ago, but I love Spain.

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:03

And have you been to

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:04

When

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:04
the Basque

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:05
I, when I

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:05
territory

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:05
lived there,

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:06
where

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:06
yeah,

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:06
we

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:06
we, we were not this beautiful. Haven't been to those. So I'll have to visit our, our partner university, in the near future. I think I was, I was a Spaniard in a past life. There. And,

I am.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:21
and you are fluent in Spanish. Which is. Asset for your career,

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:25
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:26
especially now when you, you

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:27
Mm-hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:27

know, help our Spanish neighbors, that need it more than ever. I've been so grateful for, um, I've been so grateful for even the ACLU, you know, putting out posters and campaigns in both English and Spanish. Letting people

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:39

Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:39

know their rights, um, if they do get approached by ICE and if they

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:42

Mm-hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:42

have a knock on the door or a knock on their window of their car. cause the law is already complex and not knowing, like.

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:49

Right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:50

Do you let them in? Do they have a warrant? But the language barrier on top of that, you know, and a lot of times, first

JULIE LEFTWICH 26:56

Mm-hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:56

generation children are the translators. And that's a huge responsibility for those children. And they don't know the law, you know? I mean, adults, we still don't know all the laws and. It, it loopholes and things like that. and one thing we were talking how divided we as a nation and, and I really think it's tragic and I do believe in America and I do think we need to hit rock bottom. And I think we are very much at that very base of rock bottom, um, so that we can build back up, a broken system. But one thing that, I'd love hear more from you, Julie, um, you recently, I think it was a film screening, and you got to get together online with Israeli and Palestinian women peace builders, who are working together to model peace. And I know the Israeli group is called women wage peace and the Palestinian group is women of the sun.

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:49

yeah, they're

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:50

Could you

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:50

two

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:50

tell

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:50

amazing

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:50

us about

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:51

groups

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:51

that

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:51

and I actually,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:51

experience?

JULIE LEFTWICH 27:51

I met um, September of. This was 2024. It was actually very shortly after I joined the law schools to develop the International Peace and Security Initiative. I was in D. C., and the leaders of each group were in the U. S. They had been in New York because they had just received the Foundation, the Clooney Albee Awards. And then they were in D. C. to receive Hillary Clinton Award from the Georgetown Institute of Women, Peace and Security. So I was able to spend time with them, including some personal, you know, we had brunch with a group of And, you know, they were just so inspirational. I mean, on many levels. One, you know, when I do this work with, so many people I'm working with are in the, like, living conflict. I mean, they're in the middle of active And they, they store um, advocating. I mean, I mean, right before I moved back to Cincinnati in 2017, I was Turkey, in Gaziantep, Turkey, near the border of Syria, and I was, I was training women uh, you know, uh, Syrian, u, Syrian human rights defenders, uh, to advocate around sexual violence and conflict. And there were people in Idlib province that we had from Syria, joining us via Zoom for this, you know, multi-day training. And they literally had bombs going off around them in the conference but at any rate, so one, you know, they just, it's, it's be able to spend time with these peace builders in the midst of everything. two, I think, know, seeing, especially, I mean, Israel Palestinian conflict, obviously has been fraught for many, many, many, many years. but the, you know, post October 7th, obviously just divided the entire world about the conflict. so I think, you know, now that more than ever being able to see Israelis and Palestinians can actually work together

and they do. And they have, I mean, I remember when I was in Israel in 1990 as a teenager, you know, going to a summer camp where there were Israeli and Palestinian, um, teens working together. So it's, you know, it's an ongoing thing. And again, know, for me, those are very important stories for people to hear. And that's, which is one of the reasons, we did that screening. In October, we had colleagues from the University of Haifa, uh, in Israel, which is a part of a strategic partner university of the, of, of UC. I had been there, we'd been there, um, in May as part of the UC faculty delegation. And, they were telling us about the, uh, this is, and we heard this a lot from all the universities. We visited over there that in the days after October 7th, they had to work really hard to bring their communities back together because a lot of people don't realize that Israel is actually quite a diverse country, especially in the North. I mean, the University of Haifa is about 44% Arab or, you know, Jews and others. So non, non-Jewish. And so in the days after October 7th, everybody was scared, everybody was angry, you know, these people had been living and studying, working together, they had to bring back together. Um, so, you know, the, they were in Cincinnati and they spoke about, those experiences and the, and The programs that they had developed to bring, know, students and faculty back together. know, so, so many of those stories, you know, even now we're, we're developing, one of the things we're working on as part of the International Peace and Security Initiative and the work I'm doing with students is to on some projects with, on some projects with Palestinian, um, peace builders that are working on, some different concepts toward, towards a two-state solution, how to get there and, you know, working on peace agreements and stuff. So we're contributing, directly to that. And again, This is tough, toughest conflict to work on. Not necessarily because it's the worst. I mean, nobody talks about Sudan. Sudan's probably the worst, but.

We're old being divided. Being divided. Um, and there are people that don't want to see, they're going to be angry no matter what. And I just keep on my position that we are working. With Israelis and Palestinians who are working together towards peace. And that's where the focus has to be. Not Not on this anger, not on, you know, protesting peace, right? Just because you have Israelis and Palestinians that are working together. I mean, yes, there are atrocities happening, and yes, it's, you know, it's absolutely just horrifying what's happening, but, the people that actually want peace. And there are a lot of them. that's who we have to support. and just going back to Uh, the, um, online event that you mentioned in February, so, you know, a lot of people ask me, how I stay inspired, how I keep my hope in these horrible times. And that was, so that event, it was a film screening, a new documentary that come out about their work. And so we screened the documentary, then had a conversation some women from each group, women, which piece of women of the sun. And it came up quickly, the event. And I had other things, you know, I had other deadlines happening. And so for a week I was like up all night, which I, do way, way more often than I should, especially at this age. but it was not long. It was just a few weeks after inauguration when, it just felt so depressed and desperate. And I just remember in the middle of the night when I was feeling like, this is what's going to get me through, you know, having the privilege to work with these women. And work with peace builders around the world, who again are just, you know, they're keeping at it no matter what. That's where I draw my hope and inspiration

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 33:08

Yeah. I remember it was last August, 2025. And I saw it on NPR and Al Jazeera that there was a pro democratic, end of war protest in Israel. Over 1 million Israelis marched in the streets, over 500,000 in Tel Aviv to end war, return the hostages and broker peace. And I jumped on social media, Instagram.

see how much was covered. Where was I seeing it? And maybe like two or three news channels were covering it. And there wasn't a lot of photos and videos. And to me, I was really disappointed because I think that's so important to see that Israelis who are living through war amongst Palestinians. As their neighbors, they want peace just as much, but a lot of it is censored

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:03

Right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:03

right now

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:04

Yeah. There's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:04

from their

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:04

people want to

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:05

government

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:05

keep

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:05

as

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:05

certain

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:05

well.

JULIE LEFTWICH 34:05

narratives. Not, I actually was able to be a part of some of that. when I was there in May, part of the time I was there, I was part of a university of Cincinnati faculty delegation. Where we were visiting some of our partner universities, but then I was there extra time to, know, continue to build on these collaborations that I'm building for the international peace and security initiative. And visiting some of these organizations. I, you know, visited women wage peace in Israel. I also went to the West bank. I, I went to the office of women of the sun. and, you know, met with a lot of different groups. Um, I was supposed to, while I was there, I was hoping to go out and do, um, there are organizations that do, what they call protective company work in the West bank. And so they'll go out, and, know, sometimes just have presence in communities, but, you know, also we'll go out with shepherds, uh, to protect them from settler violence. So I really, really wanted to do that. It didn't work um, schedule wise, and that's, you know, I'm, I always laugh and say I should have been like a war correspondent. Cause I really like to go into places and see, I want to see for myself what's happening on the ground for my own interest, but I also think it makes me a better advocate and, you know, I can educate people more. but yeah, when you go to these places, I mean, you can see and you can understand the trauma, right? I mean, we at some point were, you know, two miles from Gaza and I really, really wanted to go to the border and go in, but of course that was not an option. But, you know, sit with Israelis who are so traumatized. I mean, I don't think people understand. I mean, for this to happen to the Jewish community, which I can speak to because I come from that community, for something like this to happen. you know, the attacks of October 7th is incredibly traumatic and incredibly scary. I mean, and people don't really want to focus on the violence that happened that day as well, including the sexual violence, which people want to deny. But when you go there and you talk to the people, I mean, and they tell you, this is, this is the street that, you know, this is the highway that Hamas was going up and down all day. I mean, we were at a, at a rehabilitation center and they were describing what was happening that day. And, how one of the workers went out to go home and they ran her off the road and they killed her. And, and so you hear those things and we went to the Nova festival site and you see it just like all these, it's become a memorial site because families have come and put pictures of their loved ones. And you stand there and you stand there and you read the stories. And one of the stories, I read, I mean, it just gives me chills. I would never forget it. It's about this young woman. I think she was 19 years old. She went to the festival music festival that was shot by Hamas, was lying on the ground, called her parents And for seven minutes, talked to them as she was bleeding out and dying. And I cannot, I mean, being a parent, I, I cannot imagine the agony of listening to your child die on the telephone. So, you know, I feel like it's, it's very easy for people to just, know, glaze over that narrative. but that doesn't the atrocities that the Israeli government is committing in Gaza. and that's also very painful given our background and the fact that, these atrocities are being committed. that some of the words that are coming out of those, um, you know, the right burden extremists in Israel, I can't believe they are words that are coming out of the mouth of the Jewish people. And it, it breaks my and certainly, you know, when I went to the office of women of the sun in the West bank, I was actually, while I was there, the son of one of the staff members who had been in Israeli prisons October 7th, I think it was like 19 years old, had just been released and came to the office. And again, he was just like a couple of years younger than my son. And I was like, I can't even imagine. and, you know, they had like 50, 500, members in Gaza who had

been killed. I just, it's just unimaginable, but that's, that's where I, I, I get frustrated because we have to be able to recognize the pain on all sides. Right. Cause so we can say, you know, Hamas are terrorists. They, they do horrible things. Anti-Semitism absolutely exists. And it's scary. It's scary for Very scary

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 38:06
all.

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:06
moment. But again, Israel's committing atrocities. So, it's not one or the other, and we have recognize the pain on all sides. And it's very, I think it's, it's hard again. That's where we have to have that empathy, right. And put ourselves in other people's

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:23
I do think, Julie, one of disturbing aspects of it. Was a feeling that Netanyahu and Trump, uh, to stay in needed

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:33
They're

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:33
the

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:34
trying to

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:34
conflict

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:34
stay out

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:34
to

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:34
of jail.

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:34
be unresolved.

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:36
Mm-hmm. And that's, you know, another

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:38

Yeah.

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:38

thing

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 38:38

Yeah.

JULIE LEFTWICH 38:38

too, is I think just like here, there's so many people in Israel, Like you're saying, Meredith, I mean, they're against the war, the protesting. I forgot to mention, too, I did go to one of those protests. that, that don't want this and they don't want that government. They, they want it out on the power. I mean, hopefully things will change at the elections. oh, I forgot to mention too, when I was there in May, there was a people's peace summit in Jerusalem that brought together like 5,000 people. and the first day was kind of a cultural day. So, you know, they had cultural events and music and, and happening throughout the city. We went to, you know, amazing, um, concert of, of music, Israeli and Palestinian musicians, playing together beautiful music. And then the second day they had panels and, speak speakers and such. And it was amazing. Again, not only six, 5,000 people there, but on stage, you know, you had former hostages and you had people from Gaza and you had Israeli and Palestinian leaders and, you know, Up there together, again, together, because it can't happen. And they were able to recognize the pain on both sides of the wrongdoing and just saying this is enough, enough is enough, and we want peace. And they said that the peace camp is actually the larger camp, right, in the Middle East. People want peace. We just, again, don't hear about I mean, I have been told recently by some of our PR people that, my story doesn't sell. Like, people don't want, people don't want to hear about peace. They want to hear about war.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:04

Yes, yes. and Julie, this might But if I may ask you, as, um, a Jewish-American woman who has been in both Israel and Palestine during the war, and you are amongst peacebuilders, do you feel a sense of security when you are in Palestine

JULIE LEFTWICH 40:23

Well,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:23

during

JULIE LEFTWICH 40:24

you know,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:24

these

JULIE LEFTWICH 40:24

that's a good

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:24

times?

JULIE LEFTWICH 40:24

question, and I have a very interesting answer for you. you know, I was a little bit worried about going into the West Bank, and I kept texting my colleagues there, you know, How should I, how should I come? You know, do I need to take a car, a taxi? Do I take a bus? You know, am I going to be safe? And they kept saying, no, you're fine, you're safe. Take the bus from Jerusalem, you're fine. And one of them said, well, you're, you'll be safer here than you are in Tel Aviv right now, which is probably Um, but I, you know, I felt completely, I was in, I was in Bethlehem. You know, you know, which is relative, relatively

at the West Bank. But I felt completely safe. I felt very welcome. I actually had, I had the honor, um, I was meeting with the woman fr a local NGO there. and I didn't realize that she had just been, elected deputy mayor of Bethlehem. So the first woman. And I met her in her new office and that

very welcome. When I went to the Women of the Sun's office, I just, I couldn't have been more welcome. when I did not feel safe was one day when I, was in Jerusalem and I found my, uh, I was actually looking for a chocolate shop. And I was, you know, I'm walking and I, all of a sudden I look around I'm surrounded by ultra Orthodox people. And I realized I'm in an ultra Orthodox neighborhood and I started freaking out. Cause just don't know. I mean, I really wanted to, to get out of there.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:50

hmm. Well, I just want thank you and take a second to commend you and show our appreciation for you sharing, your personal experience. you know, visiting the site of October 7th and being yourself a peace builder, in the West bank and in Bethlehem and Tel Aviv. we have not had the honor of having somebody with that personal hands-on experience. Come on to the podcast and kind of you to share and use your time there to help bring I'm just so grateful to hear your perspective. and any friends who are listening of mine and family members have heard me say this many times. I do think for us to continue moving the needle forward and bringing global peace and justice, not only in the United States, but across the world in conflict zones is we need to be able to hold two truths accountable.

JULIE LEFTWICH 42:42

Um,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:42

Um, and I think

JULIE LEFTWICH 42:42

Talking about

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:42

that's exactly

JULIE LEFTWICH 42:43

Being

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:43

what.

JULIE LEFTWICH 42:44

Jewish, being a peace builder. I've been thinking in recent months, like since the fall, how much to talk about it, like, talk about my background. Sometimes, you know, I, I do feel scared to do it, right. Because there are, a lot of assumptions once you say you're, you're Jewish, but I think also it's, you know, it's important to share that struggle because I really have struggled with How is this, how is this happening? This has nothing to do with the values that I have, really as a Jew, because I consider myself a Buddhist too, it's, it's hard. So I think that's something, it's really important for people to know that we are struggling with it and you can't equate just, just like you can't equate all Americans with Trump. You can't equate all Jewish people with Netanyahu and

As well, I'll just say and let people know the struggles. I, you know, I, Hannah Einbinder gave a speech. At what awards was

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:41

Oh.

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:41

it?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:42

Yes.

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:43

Yeah, maybe.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:44

I

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:44

Yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:44
think it might've been

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:45
she

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:45
Emmys.

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:45
was

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:45
I

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:45
talking

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:45
think she

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:45
about

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:45
won an

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:45
that, how, you know, she was

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:46
Yea.

JULIE LEFTWICH 43:47
Jewish, but how this is, goes completely against her beliefs and values.

BERT LOCKWOOD 43:55
had an experience I was at, an annual dinner of American Jewish I think in Washington, and, Tom Bergenthal, came up to me, you know, Bergenthal a law professor. Uh, he was the youngest survivor of one of the, uh, uh, uh, death camps the Holocaust. And, he was going to speak to this conservative Jewish group. Uh, and he said to me, he said, I don't know what to say. I'm really nervous. And I had come across, uh, uh, article in a student newspaper that, that talked about a talk that he had given where was, he was a member of the Inter-American

Commission of Human Rights. And he had gone to, uh, I think it was Guatemala, and, it was one of the Latin American countries. And he had gone to El Mazzotti, which was um, indigenous community that was, massacred.

was interviewing the sole survivor. And he it was weird that he was completing her sentences before she said them. I mean, he almost came into this, like, trance-like kind of thing. And he couldn't figure out what was going on.

And, um, so he did that, but I mean, it was a sort of a, sort of tie that story of a current human rights situation into the, the Holocaust was sort of an effective way to try to reach that audience that might not have as sympathetic, you know.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 45:38

And, um, yeah, and, Julie, to kind of, my patch, passed that torch on to me, with a connection to Judge Bergenthal. hi memoir is called A Lucky Child. And, it's one of the most movie memoirs of Holocaust that I've ever read. he entered Auschwitz at the age of 10, um, after surviving two ghettos and a labor camp. did a talk at NYU, um, when I was living in New York at the time. And he was, he never really wanted to share the story. but his children and his grandchildren said, you

JULIE LEFTWICH 46:11

Mm-hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 46:11

have to tell your

JULIE LEFTWICH 46:11

Mm-hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 46:12

story. We need more truth. We need to record history. And it was a very small audience at NYU. And just like the talk, my dad, you know, heard him say that he got up there and he was so nervous. You could just tell how nervous he was to share his story and read from his memoir. And it was one of the most moving discussions I've ever had. And I got the courage to go up to him and introduce myself as Professor Burt Lockwood's daughter and how much his book meant to me. I probably read it four times at that point. And he signed it and sent and gave me his email and we corresponded through the years. And it just meant a lot to Um, and so I, I say that back to you. Um, I think being so lucky to be from Cincinnati and go to Walnut Hills, I was surrounded with friends that were Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, agnostic, Christian, you name it. growing up, I got to go to Hanukkah parties. I got to go to bar mitzvahs. I got to experience all the celebration.

BERT LOCKWOOD 47:12

Yeah. I thought my girls were more Jewish than, uh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 47:15

yeah. I mean, my sister honestly thought about converting because she had such a deep connection to Judaism, um, through Walnut Hills and our wonderful friends, and Amberlee, et cetera. and in 2020 to 2023, my best friend from Walnut Hills, her name is Jessica Johnson. She's a lawyer out in LA now. we started an anti-racism nonprofit where we brought together 150 women to talk about racism through education and community. Um, and men, I mean, we started off with 25 Walnut Hills women and then we had them invite friends and they invited friends. and it was a very safe space. It was racially diverse. We made sure people were vetted we call it Unified Sisters Co-op. All of my Jewish girlfriends who were part of the co-op, they were so unbelievably educational and inspiring. Now I will say seeing what they've gone through since October 7th and nowadays with the war, they've, they've gotten a bit quieter and they are

JULIE LEFTWICH 48:08

Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 48:09

scared. Um, and they do talk to me one-on-one because they know I'm a safe space and they talk to other co-op members because we are trusted sources to, to have important dialogues. But it has really broken my heart that they are so smart and deeply want to be peace builders just like you, but they're scared to share their voice in different, you

JULIE LEFTWICH 48:29

It's hard. I mean, this is the first time in my life I've ever felt any sense of like anti-Semitism or any sense of fear. I mean, you know, we've gotten used to it's been many years now that, you know, we don't have a Jewish gathering without a police, you

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 48:44

Yeah.

JULIE LEFTWICH 48:44

know. The services, you go to bar mitzvah, anything, but this is the first time where I have really felt. And, you know, I feel like, I feel like I'm always having them when I talk about the conflict, I'm always having to apologize. But I'm like, what, what am I apologizing for? I'm not, I'm trying to bring peace. Like, it's not, it is, it's, it's, yeah, it's. And it makes me sad, you know, with the, with the Holocaust survivors, you know, getting so few, it's going to be so easy. That's something, you know, something I think about a lot too, is how many, the similarities Jewish and Muslim communities have, not just, you know, as I've been learning more over the past year, I was supposed to go to Iraq over the summer and then there's going to be a holiday. It got, you know, when, when the Iran bombings broke out, that all got canceled, but there was a holiday, then I started reading about it. And anyway, it brought me to like a lot of similarities, like the biblical similarities and historical similarities between the, between the religions. But then also, I think about the trauma that, that we've all, I mean, unfortunately, a lot of the

trauma that's happening now with Gaza is being committed by, you know, people who happen to be Jewish. But there's so much shared there, you know, if we could like focus on You know, I've heard a young she recently graduated undergrad. And was reading a poem that she at the end of it I went to.

so, like, painful and angry. And I was just thinking, it pops in my head, I wonder what she knows about the Holocaust Because I don't even know, you know, growing up Jewish, I mean, it's just, it's, it's, it's, it's just omnipresent that I don't know, first of all, just what people out in the general public learn about it, but to, you know, with that, and it just felt, it just felt like, if people could just understand, like, that we all have so much shared trauma, and if we could just, we just need to stop it.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 50:40

Absolutely. And I was just in Amsterdam for a month, and I used to live there for three years from 2015 to 2017. And I've probably been to the Anne Frank house about six times. And a friend from Cincinnati actually came in November to visit Amsterdam when I was there. And my first thing was like, well, let's definitely go to the Anne Frank house. And candidly, I was really curious, like, would it, it's usually always sold out in lines around the block. And I was curious if it would still have that weight. And it was packed. I mean, I got tickets a month in advance. They sell out so quickly. And I also just wanted to see where people as respectful as they have been on my previous times. And it was, as always, a very somber and insightful experience. And that, to me, was a bit of hope that I needed, that people are still going to pay their respects and learn. Learn, you know, learn about Anne Frank. And, you know, her father, Otto, did such an incredible job curating that museum and the experience that you get. so I feel like that was a little bit of hope that I was looking for.

JULIE LEFTWICH 51:44

And I feel like that, you know, I feel like that. But, that was really because I, like, I feel it. And maybe it's brought on by, also, like, a current circumstances in our country and our world. But I just, I have dreams. I have Nazis coming to come to the Nazis coming to take me away. And it's real.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:05

It's very

BERT LOCKWOOD 52:06

been reading a lot on Julie. I mean, I've got a number of them recently. I think it might make an interesting seminar at

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:15

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 52:15

the law school. If you and I.

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:18

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 52:20

Let's, let's think about that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:21

I

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:21

Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:21

think it's very much needed. Yeah. And Julie, it's something right now that you have the bandwidth to read Holocaust memoirs? Or is it, is it too heavy and too much right now?

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:34

I, I, it depends. Kind of depends on the moment. Yeah, it depends on the moment.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:38

Yeah. Well, if you'd ever like to read A Lucky Child by Termas Bergenthal, like,

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:42

Okay.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:42

let us know. Um, I have extra copies. I've just always kept them for friends.

JULIE LEFTWICH 52:47

Okay. Thank you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:49

but passion of yours that I would love to talk a bit about, which is one of my passions is, women and children through the lens of peace and justice. And I would love to know more about the incredible work you've done, in the framework into real change for women empowerment. I would love to tell our listeners more about how you establish the center for international peace and security at the university of Cincinnati law school.

JULIE LEFTWICH 53:19

it's an idea I had had for, for quite a while, you to Cincinnati, you know, I've always kept my, my foot in that international world and in the thing of peace and security. So I continued to DC based consulting work and keep my network. Um, and so, you know, even, at the immigrant refugee law center, I was always kind of that human rights and peace and security aspect of it,

you know, like what, what is driving, what, what is driving people to come here? You know, what are the issues, which, you know, partly if you're working on asylum cases, you have to look at that anyway, but just because that's, you know, the lens I work through, what are the insecurities that are driving people here? and I've been thinking about, how can I build up that work? then, uh, a couple of years ago, uh, when Dean Heider Hamoudi came to the law schools and as our new Dean, he reached out to me and we started having some conversations. you know, he, he's very internationally minded, wanted to, you know, kind build on all these great programs, international programs we have built on those know, provide experiential learning, which is a really important part of the university. So, we started talking about these ideas and he, he brought me on board to develop it. so for me, it's a real honor, for many reasons, one, to be able to, you know, because I had been thinking, okay, what else, you know, I always come to that, point of what else can I do in Cincinnati? but, you know, to have this opportunity to do the work I love in Cincinnati as an institution where I have such a family history and a personal history. And, you know, also to be at the law school and to be able to work Urban Morgan. I think it's, a real privilege, but I think it provides an opportunity because it really, you know, it really is about changing that paradigm of, what peace and security are. So, beyond the traditional notions of, what we call state security, you know, so protecting orders, protecting territory, kind of know, traditional, of security and warfare on, you know, very kind of like military base to what we call human security, so much more right based and human focused security. And, um, Uh, I said we've, we've, a lot of my background has been in the women peace and security field, to me ultimately is about getting to the root causes of conflict. because, you know, the whole agenda came out of the recognition of the, the impact of today's conflict on women and children, and that, uh, uh, what really drove me to want to, um, study human rights for my four minute years in college and in the early and mid nineties, when we had the, uh, conflict of Bosnia. And the Rwandan genocide. And those were the first kind of CNN wars that were playing out before our eyes on TV. And I remember, you know, learning about those and talking about those in my classes and feeling, okay, like I need to do something about this. And that's actually when the, you know, this really, you know, the women, peace and security, the advocacy from women who had been, affected by these conflicts, um, really led to, this framework that we have. but, you know, it's really about, I mean, it's, it's, it's about making sure that women are at the table and all, all conflict resolution and peace processes, not just because they represent more than 50% of, of population. Um, but also because of the perspective they bring in looking at the, the causes of conflict again, you know, instead of just putting band-aids on things, thinking about, okay, how did we get here? Um, especially because, you know, until a few years ago, when, when you, when Russia invaded Ukraine, it wasn't so much, um, anymore about territory, you know, after the fall of Soviet Union, we started seeing much more kind of internal conflicts and civil wars. and so, bringing up that perspective of, of why, like what's, what's happening.

and, you know, what is causing in our communities, and it's not just about, you know, typically what we see You know, the men coming around the table, the men who have been in the government, the men who have been, you know, the warmongers, all the men sitting around, in usually nice hotels that they've been put up in, in these peace processes and thinking about, okay, once we lay down our arms, you know position who's going to be, you know, this

minister and that minister and actually there's film called, uh, Pray the Devil Back to Hell. This is the story of women in Liberia that, I mean, you can see this, you see it on camera, the men doing but once women are at the table, which still is very rare, you know, they bring those perspectives. So it's not, it's not just about power. It is about humans and it is about community. And it is about what is happening to women and children and marginalized people, in conflict and, and how, we can actually stop the cycle, which is, I think, even more challenging now with all the rhetoric and, you know, now that we're governed on social media and we have leaders talking about how they're going to bomb each other to oblivion, it's challenging. anyway, so, the point is to this center that you know, change uh, educate students in the broader community about what security really is in today's world, uh, what peace building means, how to do what are better, better pathways to peace. So, you know, help educate our, our future leaders in the broader community, and just, also help the work that's being that, you know, since I come health and it's very important for me that whatever work we're doing actually support peace builders that are, that are, you know, out doing this work every day. So it's a win-win situation, you know, we're preparing featured leaders, students, are learning through these experiences, and they're supporting things that are actually happening in real-time conflicts.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 58:48

Absolutely, and more of a personal question in a way, because I always get really excited to have guests on that are my dad's former students and that have been part of the Human Rights Quarterly. Through your time with the Urban Morgan Institute, were there any, like, lessons that you've carried with you to establish this center now at UC Law? Does it, does it feel like a full circle moment is perhaps a better question?

JULIE LEFTWICH 59:15

Yeah, absolutely, right? I think it, it, it really is. I mean, I, you know, I've been saying that this, to me, feels like the culmination of my career. Um, one, because yes, it very much at UC Law and, and with Urban Morgan and your and then, you know, I've had all these experiences and I haven't been, I'm, I definitely have not been a traditional lawyer. Um, um, you know, my, my work has been, uh, much broader in terms of advocacy and policy and capacity building. And like you said, kind of demystifying frameworks for people, whether it be, you know, parliamentarians down to, know, people that in huts in Africa. but being able to bring all that back home again, i, you not only home, it's , an institution that, that I care a lot about. and being able to share these experiences with, with students, I mean, you know, the year so many young people have come to me and said, Oh, I'm going to be you. I'm going to do what you do. How, how can I do it? So this is kind giving students those tools. I'm still learning all the time every day from all the So yeah, it very much is full circle.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:18

And I know you two had a lunch way back when, and dad, or maybe Julie, did you ask about the Freedom Center in Cincinnati?

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:00:28

No, I think Bert, you brought it up.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:31

Yeah, I don't have a great recollection, but I think that was probably the case because I was involved the founding and stuff of the Freedom In fact, at one point, wanted me to head it up, I, Sor of indicated I, I could do it temporarily if they fund an interim replacement for me at the law school, but they didn't have kind of money, uh, but one of the things we did early on in the Freedom Center we did the, I think it was the third floor, it was the, the last exhibition, which was The Struggle Continues, and, they had these computer screens, and they, at the institute to put together the content for those screens, and so, it actually, uh, I remember Marcy Warrington with the human rights students, taking on task, and it was, it was fascinating because part of the real challenge of, defining human rights, we had to do it for the museum, uh, visitor, and it turned out it was a, sort of a seventh grader was what you needed to be able to, uh, communicate with, and one of the things that I found is, is, it's, it's more difficult, uh, talking about human rights to younger people, I mean, it's, it's, it's real easy with law students, um, but that there's real challenges in terms of, when you're outside the law school, of, speaking in terms of human with examples and things for the students. But I was really proud work that the students did in that class for providing content. the Freedom Center, Judge Jones, Nathaniel Jones, was very involved with it, as was John Pepper. Those were the principal involved, and it was a privilege being able work with them. I think it's become very important in particularly the black community in Cincinnati. I think it's been a real resource in terms of educational programs and the like.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:02:47

And actually, what came up in that conversation was that at the time, that's when they were thinking about they wanted to develop like an anti-trafficking program.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:02:57

Oh, yes.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:02:58

know, I like I always am and, you know, was looking to do more human rights international work. And, yeah, so that's why I connected then came on

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:03:11

about one year of funding from the State Department or something.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:03:14

board. It was a couple of years. In 2008, when everything crashed,

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:03:17

when

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:03:18

that's

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:03:18

I

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:03:19

was eliminated again and went back to D. C. But, yeah, that was a great it was a great connection.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:03:24

And for our listeners, I just want be able to share a little more context of what the Freedom Center is. And the official title is the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. And what makes it unique in Cincinnati is that it's on the bank of the Ohio River, which is our historic boundary between slave states and free states. And the center's mission is to inspire understanding of inclusive freedom and provoke dialogue and action for issues of justice, both past and present. So if you're in Cincinnati, you haven't visited or if you're heading to a trip to the Midwest and you make it there, it's it's really a worthwhile museum and education center to visit.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:04:00

Yeah, the Cincinnati played a pivotal role in Civil and Uncle Tom's Cabin was written in Cincinnati Harriet Beecher Stowe.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:04:10

Um, and on the subject, of migration and I want to be conscious of Julie's time because you've been so generous, um, is, in 2017 you founded, the Immigrant and Refugee Law Center. it is a non-profit serving thousands of immigrant and refugee families, particularly women fleeing gender-based violence. I just wanted to also provide... a spotlight on that incredible nonprofit that is doing imperative work, more than ever right now. and you know, Julie, your work reminds us that even in moments of democratic strain, resistance and collective action still matter and having open dialogue and building those bridges really do make an impact. where do you see real grounds for hope right now?

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:04:53

yeah, think going back to what we were discussing before, I think a few things. One, like I said, I, you know, I draw my own hope and inspiration from all these like wonderful, amazing peace builders I work with around the world and conflict countries, but, you know, close to the, you know, close to home, I, I, I do feel the true resistance that is happening, not just the, you know, the signs know, doing Trump 1.0 is like resist or. I think the signs we, um, the size

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:05:20

Yeah.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:05:20

of the signs we had at the very, very beginning. it's more than just signs now. I mean, I think people, I think these, you know, sustained protests and, and people going out in Minneapolis when it's so, so, so cold and just standing out there and, just standing up for what are supposed to be the American ideals, right. and, and what the people want the lines that we don't want to as a country. I think there's a lot of hope in that now. And, know, supporting organizations like the immigrant refugee law centers, supporting international peace and security initiatives. So we can train our future leaders. I mean, I think there's, you know, there are local. Things that people can get involved with. A I, do want to let people know that sometimes opening your wallet is the best thing you can do. Um, you know, sometimes, you know, people want to volunteer. They want to, you know, be able to, we had this a lot, the immigrant refugee law center to people wanting to volunteer and have that direct contact with people. Sometimes you just need to support the service providers. And, just understand that, that, that goes a long, long way too. So there's a lot of different ways you can support and be a part of, the hope.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:28

Well, we are so grateful. And, I have many incredible friends who are immigration lawyers and they're exhausted and the work does not stop. So I just want to profusely thank you for all the work you do and your colleagues and your friends and your community. Everyone that works with But we are all so grateful and we will get through this together.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:06:47

Yes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:06:48

We, we love you, Ju.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:06:50

Oh, thank you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:53

Yes. And next time I'm home, I would love to see you in person.

JULIE LEFTWICH 1:06:55

Yes. Yes. We do. We have to do that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:07:03

Hey, listeners. My dad and I hope you enjoyed today's inspiring conversation with Julie. immigration and asylum to freedom of protest global conflict and democratic accountability, she helped us name what is at stake with clarity and care. We are very grateful to Julie for speaking so openly at a time when that openness carries real significance. Her leadership, moral courage, and commitment to human dignity reminds us that human rights work is not theoretical. It is lived. It is urgent. we hope this discussion invites reflection, encourages honest discourse in your and deepens understanding of what is at stake right now. If you would like to

share any of your own insights or takeaways, feel free to email us at humanrightsconversations@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you. Until next time.