Human Rights – Conversations Across Generations
Episode: Mark Gibney
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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 0:26
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, po leaders and the world's leading human rights scholars and activists.

Today, we welcome our friend, Professor Mark Gibney to the show. He is the Carol G. Belk Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina, Asheville, and is also an affiliate professor the Raul Wallenberg Institute in Lund, Sweden. Mark has spent decades at the forefront of the human rights movement as a scholar, teacher, and researcher. He has taught across the United States and internationally, from Purdue University to the University of Copenhagen, Lund University, and the University of Bergen, helping shape generations of students who are now working to advance justice around the world. Mark is a longtime colleague of my dad's, and their shared work goes back many years through Amnesty International. In our conversation, we explore the powerful role of film in human rights education through Mark's course, Watching Human Rights, The 101 Best Films, where storytelling becomes a bridge between complex legal concepts and lived experiences. We discuss a variety of films featured in his teaching, from Oscar-nominated The Alabama Solution

to the award-winning documentary My New Country, Nobody Against Putin, and the landmark film Darwin's Nightmare, We all of which challenge us to confront injustice around the world. We also turn to the current human rights landscape, discussing urgent issues unfolding in the United States and around the world, from Iran to Palestine and beyond. and what these moments reveal about the strength of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and the responsibility we all share defending human rights.

let's jump into our discussion

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:49
welcome to the show. We're so glad to have you on Human Rights Conversations Across Generations, and I know you and my dad have been friends for many, many years, so we're really excited to start this conversation.

MARK GIBNEY 3:00
Thank you very much. Great to be here. Great to see both of you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:04
Likewise.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:05
It's wonderful to be in touch again. Very much looking forward to our conversation.

MARK GIBNEY 3:09
Oh, me too. Me too.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:11
I need to connect the dots for our listeners because you two have been friends for how many years?

MARK GIBNEY 3:19
1986, at Notre Dame, that's where we it was a very beautiful fall day, and I had started teaching at Purdue in 1984, and I was up at Notre Dame, and I met the great man. I met Bert Lockwood at Notre Dame, uh, and, and, uh, I remember it. could almost tell you where we were sitting,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:41
well, my dad won't remember. Do you remember?

MARK GIBNEY 3:43
No, he doesn't remember me at all. He doesn't even know that he's ever met me before.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:48
...well...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:49
No. No.

MARK GIBNEY 3:50
Mark

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:51
...no, I've never had a good memory... ...but,

MARK GIBNEY 3:52
Oh,

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:53
Mer, you went with me to Notre... ...at one point...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:57
No,

MARK GIBNEY 3:57
I don't think so. I've never met, I've never met Meredith, I don't think in person. I don't think I've ever met.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:02
not in the

MARK GIBNEY 4:03
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:03
flesh.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:03
...oh...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:04
That was with Terry

MARK GIBNEY 4:05
yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:06
But this is a special year for you two because if you met in

MARK GIBNEY 4:09
Ah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:09
1986, this is your 40 years of friendship.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:12
...wow...

MARK GIBNEY 4:12
yeah,

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:13
...well, we'll... ...we'll

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:13
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:13
have to mark that...

MARK GIBNEY 4:14
Yeah, but we do need to go back to our, we, and Meredith, if you think we've been far afield today, you should see the Sunday night, uh, sessions. A bottle, some beer, some Bert, because I enjoy those immensely.

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:30
...yes...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 4:32
because of everything happening in the United States and in the Middle East and abroad, is there any human rights topic you really want to talk

MARK GIBNEY 4:42
you know, I did a local, just for the local TV station, I was asked a TV station. I've never watched the news on, right. I've been interviewed a few times and I've never, never bothered watching it, but I was asked the question whether the invasion of, you know, the, the war with Iran was, was legal. And I said, well, no, it's not under international law. It's, it's clearly illegal. And my students said to me, have you seen the comments on, on the comments on that? And I said, no, I don't, I don't have, uh, what was it on? Well, it's on Twitter or something like that. But they said they, you know, they, they were overwhelmingly negative, like that Professor Gibney here doesn't, but, but it, it is, yeah, I guess the people listening to your podcast would not be angry at someone saying that the war with Iran is illegal. It's, it's both unconstitutional, but that one probably is more leeway, but in terms of international law, it's for sure illegal. Right.

how do you see this thing evolving? I mean, it seems like it's like a stalemate. It just kind of goes on and on and,

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:55
evolving is an interesting, word. you know, the problem our current administration, there's, there's not a lot of input. One gets a the president takes into consideration. but he, sort of goes on his own instinct,

MARK GIBNEY 6:10
is

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:10
which tends not to be, uh, particularly respectful the, post World War II order that the U. S. has played principal role in establishing and which I think has, uh, largely been in our, national interest. and it's, uh, a shame to see destroyed almost, uh, overnight. I mean, with his, disregard for, our allies, I mean, alienating them, s when it comes to, uh, wanting support for, his action, that it's understandable that, our allies have not uh, positively, uh, reacting to, the war of choice that, he, he started.

MARK GIBNEY 6:49
You know, Bert, I was thinking, you remember I did some of the earliest work on state apologies? Human Rights Quarterly did, I think in 2001, a thing on this call, the status of state apologies. And one of the things I was thinking about is after this is over, after this nightmare is over, um, Any successor here, I mean, maybe not a Republican, but any Democratic successor has gonna have a long laundry list of people and institutions and countries that I an apology is warranted, right? his, what interested me was sort of the end of his term, Bill Clinton went on this apology thing, right? This apology trip, apologizing to Africa, apologizing to Guatemala, uh, Tony Blair, the Irish potato famine, we send the queen, to New Zealand, then we send her to, to India for the Amritsar massacre. But in a way, I'm wondering if a new administration will find it essential, find it essential to do something similar to that, because I think it has been so horrible, right? It has been so horrible and so in your face. And as you say, just destroying institutions that have been erected for decades now, yeah, something's gonna happen.

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:14
yes, but because it's been so bad. I think that the relief that the international community will have with the change in, uh, leadership probably makes it unnecessary. to have to formally, uh, they'll be so helpful uh, more positive and constructive and respectful the old order, is back in Um, I can remember, Mark, uh, thinking after 9-11, the world, did not appreciate how much they cared for the United States. and the outpouring of sympathy was from around the world, including amongst some countries that, you know, we thought uh, ene. if you told me that within a year that the U. S. could squander, that goodwill, I, I wouldn't have believed it, George

MARK GIBNEY 9:11
yeah,

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:12
Bush, did that with his, uh, invasions uh, Iraq and, uh, Afgh.

MARK GIBNEY 9:17
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:17
yeah,

MARK GIBNEY 9:18
I have a little story to tell you about 9-11, if I might, because Bert is someone you know, Katerina Tomaszewski.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:24
yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 9:25
and afterwards, and I you, I'm sure you had the, you experienced the same thing, is I heard from people all over the world, right, uh, colleagues. in the human rights field. And the one person I never heard from was Katerina Tomaszewski. So the next time I saw her, right now, I, and, an, and, and, and I said it to her, not like, well, my feelings were hurt or, but to say to her, I was a little bit surprised. I was a little bit surprised that I didn't hear anything from her. And you remember,she was this prodigious smoker and she takes a long drag on cigarette. And she said to me a slow morning in Rwanda, a slow morning in Rwanda. Like there were 3000 people in the building who died after nine 11. I thought to myself, she's both correct, but that, that bites, that, that hurts.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:26
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 10:27
So

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:27
Wow.

MARK GIBNEY 10:28
yeah. We left it at that. that.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:30
And, and

MARK GIBNEY 10:30

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:30
so I'm trying to was Rwanda up to 800,000?

MARK GIBNEY 10:34
Yeah. Yeah. 800,000, I think, in a hundred

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:37
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 10:37
day

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:37
And,

MARK GIBNEY 10:37
period.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:38
and what was so critical of that is an intervention could easily have stopped it because they were killing with machetes. It wasn't like they had a high weaponry to, to create the yeah, I've, I've never particularly been a, a fan of Bill that was, uh, one of the for it.

MARK GIBNEY 11:03
I'm with you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 11:03
Yeah, I agree. Did you both what happened in Iran this past week with their executions and public hangings?

MARK GIBNEY 11:15
I had read about it, but I hadn't seen it.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 11:18
it's heartbreaking. So for our listeners, we're recording on March 20th, Um, and what happened this uh, in Iran by the Islamic Republic is three protesters. They were publicly hung, Saleh Mohammadi, Saeed Devoudi, and Mehdi Ghasemi. Um, and Saleh, he was only 19 and he had only just turned 19 this week. Um, and he was also on the national wrestling team and then Stockholm just confirmed that Iran did execute a Swedish citizen who also had Iranian citizenship. saying that, you know, it was because of the Swedish government saying that's not true. human rights of Iran has come out with their public statement that the three Iranian citizens who were publicly hung is a fear tactic and that they were tortured and confessed to

the murder of a police officer, which again, they were innocent. Their family said, Um, and I think what happened before in Iran is the Islamic Republic is just going to get more extreme, more deadly attack their citizens. Um, and I don't know where the end in sight is because here in America, we don't have political leadership. We, we don't,

MARK GIBNEY 12:42
Well, we, we, we have some political leadership. It's just rather wrong-headed

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 12:47
Mm hmm.

MARK GIBNEY 12:47
political leadership, I would It's, you have the wrong kind of political leadership, right? You had, I mean, this, you know, and I, I'm repeating what a lot of people would say, it was so sudden. I mean, this was so sudden, it was kind of like this, uh, you know, the, you can't even possibly sell this imminent threat,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 13:07
No,

MARK GIBNEY 13:07
right? You can't possibly. I mean, as much as you're going to try, so, okay, then try regime change, try the, the killing demonstrators, try whatever here. But I'm pointing out the obvious here, but it is, it is a big mess. It's not playing well with the American public, certainly not playing well with the international community o any sorts. And then the question is, doe this guy keep digging? Does he keep digging or does he declare victory? don't know. I mean, I don't know, but it's, it is, so it is, has been horrible.

BERT LOCKWOOD 13:43
but the problem at this point is it's not solely in his control anymore. Um, Iran, appears to understand um, actions that it may take that skyro the, the cost of, uh, gasoline in the United States. Is, is the best at sort of eroding support for, uh, the president. and so, uh, uh, Hormuz, the Gulf and stuff, I mean, preventing the oil from, from getting through. they appear be able affect be able prevent it from reopening. And US does not have a good option. From what I you can't do this by an air campaign.

MARK GIBNEY 14:31
No,

BERT LOCKWOOD 14:32
It

MARK GIBNEY 14:32
no.

BERT LOCKWOOD 14:32
would require boots on the ground. And I the president sort of has to know that there is no from his base or anywhere. You know, other than that 30 percent that will be with him whatever he does. think the Republicans must be honest.Very , very concerned about what the results will be.

MARK GIBNEY 14:58
never underestimate the ability of the Democratic Party to snatch a defeat from the jaws of victory. Yes,

BERT LOCKWOOD 15:07
So, that's the state of the world we're, we're in. where should go from here?

MARK GIBNEY 15:13
Well, you wanted to talk a little bit about right?

BERT LOCKWOOD 15:15
...yes... and I, I be curious to, Mark, if you talk about what your experience has been using, uh, human rights films.

Track 8 15:25
Yeah. I, I'll say this part, Bert and Meredith. I, I think I've always been interested in films. when I first started teaching human rights, I didn't use any film and then it would be maybe one film. And I'd be a little bit embarrassed about it. You know, that I'd have colleagues, people talking about Mark Gibney is just showing films, but now I make it a, I make it a staple for any course I teach in human rights. So almost sort of an anchor for each week. and as I say to the students, I said, it's, it's generally, it's not me watching the film because I've seen the film oftentimes multiple times. It's me watching the students watch the film. And I don't think it's just younger people, uh, who are visual. I think I am ways. I mean, I read a lot, but I also think that for me, there's something about film that kind of removes sort of a buffer. It's one thing to read about torture and things of that sort, but I always have these misgivings. And I even remember telling the students here in, uh, in Trento, when I announced that there would be a series of films that would be seeing in the seven week course, you know, I'm sometimes is it a cheap way to do human rights? And I'm kind of convinced it's not, but that it's not just any film that will do. I like films that are kind of provocative. I don't like films that, prov all the answers. I, I, for many years on my own campus in Asheville, we've had a human rights film festival that we used to work with Amnesty International. I found the Amnesty, uh, films a little bit too didactic. It was too much of this, this finger pointing and you should feel, you should feel guilty and, and things like that. And I don't think that, that does anything. I like films that you have to kind of connect the dots.

MARK GIBNEY 17:20

I'm looking to try to do a second edition of this book, Watching Human Rights. I want to extend it, expand it to 150, maybe 200 films. So I've been on a, I've been on this thing about, uh, I want to try to have, uh, a website that may be even interactive thing. uh, so I've been on a, the kick of watching any and all human rights films. I watched the Oscars with some interest because two of the human rights films were in competition. One was Mr. Nobody Against Putin, which was a sweet film. And that actually ended up winning. My choice would have been the Alabama solution.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 18:02
Same.

MARK GIBNEY 18:03
One was about, uh, about, uh, prison conditions in, not just prison conditions,just the whole sick criminal justice system in Alabama. I mean, really. And, and, and the way that was filmed was that, that all these, uh, cel phones have been smuggled into various prisons in the state of Alabama. And the solution really, my review of the film is that the Alabama solution is no solution at all. So they're going to take a number of, of prisons and they're just going to build like two or three, you know, huge things, but they're not going to change anything about the criminal justice system. I did see that the governor here, there, uh, Kay Ivey finally commuted for the very first time in her tenure, commuted a sentence. It was a piece in the New York Times a few days before talking about how this governor has never commuted a single And I think maybe it was the combination of the film and the publicity that the film got combined with the article in the New York Times. She does commute, the sentence. I don't remember the defendant's name,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 19:17
Charles, Charles, Sonny Burton. He goes by Sonny and, important for our listeners that if you don't know about that case, please read up on it. I'll put an article on our show notes. He was seven. He is 75 years old and disabled in a wheelchair and they almost executed him. And he only found out about the governor's commuting his sentence when he was saying his final goodbyes the, even the prison staff has been interviewed and they befriended him. I mean, he's been in jail for 30 plus years. Everyone was crying, saying their final goodbyes. And this was his multiple time up for the death row, so he'd already done many goodbyes throughout the years, but this last one, he didn't find out until like that final hour, which we know is. Usually the case. Um, and Mark, yo might know that we had the honor of having sister, Helen Prejean on the podcast. And she really taught my dad and I a lot about what goes on behind the scenes of the executions. So I signed every petition I could to get Sonny commuted. And thank goodness. I mean, candidly, I can't believe the governor had a shred of decency.I mean, watching the Alabama solution, I was holding my breath that she would commute Sonny's sentence and her deciding and signing the legislation for the air quotes for our listeners. The Alabama solution is building two to three more mega prisons, tax paying dollars, $1 billion.Yeah .

MARK GIBNEY 20:45

Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 20:45
And it's still gonna be this same vicious cycle of corruption. And for those who haven't seen the Alabama Solution, um, incredible film, you know what I thought was so enlightening, Mark, from a human rights perspective, is when Stephen Davis was murdered and beaten to death by the prison guard. And witnesses saw this, his roommate saw this, that guard has now been promoted twice, and he's a lieutenant in the prison system.

MARK GIBNEY 21:18
Yeah, in a way the, the most disturbing things to me was the number of inmates who were killed. I mean, we're talking about, I don't mean execution. I don't mean the

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 21:28
Yes.

MARK GIBNEY 21:28
execution. The number of, uh, and I had forgotten his name, Stephen Davis, know, and then the guy who his cellmate who was wanting to talk to the mother when he was released, he himself was killed before his release. And so he's towing the company line, right? Saying, oh no, no. You know, he, he wanted, he was saying what the prison authorities wanted him to say, but just before he was released, he also was killed. I mean, it was sort of like, you're thinking to yourself, this is, this can't be happening in the United States in the year 2026. It simply cannot

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 22:07
and his name was James Sales, and you're right, he was one month away. And what investigation has been brought forward by not the police, but all the activists in Alabama and nationwide, are saying that they were too worried that he would publicly testify, talk to reporters. It continued to expose the underbelly of the abuse and the corruption and human rights violations, and they killed him. They killed him one month to silence him. And, and 20,000 people are in the Alabama prison system, and the film shows that 1,000 have died.

MARK GIBNEY 22:52
And,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 22:52
And, and like Mark, you were saying, it's not just about people being murdered, but OD'ing. People

MARK GIBNEY 22:57
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 02 22:59

with health issues, not getting the proper medical care. And it's not just Alabama, you know, this is happening in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Oklaho, Nebrask, Ohio, you name it. It was one of the most empowering, eye-opening, deeply sad documentaries I've, I've seen in a long, long time.

MARK GIBNEY 23:17
Me too. No, I agree. And I, I see a lot of these. And this one, anyone, anyone, I see is a, you have to see that. I'm reworking my syllabus and my human rights class. I have a former student who, of who's on the governor of North Carolina governor's task force on criminal justice reform. And so before she comes to my class, we don't have the North Carolina solution, which I'm hoping is not as bad as that, but we're going to be seeing the Alabama Solution I want my students to see what a criminal justice system that is just inhumane and barbarous. I wanted them to see that. So yeah, too bad that, too bad it didn't win the Oscar. But I did think that Mr. Nobody Against Putin was quite a good film. I don't know if you've seen that. Did you, have you

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:10
I

MARK GIBNEY 24:10
seen

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:10
saw

MARK GIBNEY 24:10
that at

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:11
that.

MARK GIBNEY 24:11
all?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:11
I don't think my dad's gotten to see that.

MARK GIBNEY 24:15
he's at the Oscars. for the listeners, I mean, I'm just trying to push kind of human rights films, but two of them nominated for an Oscar.

Mr. Nobody is a guy whose name I don't recall who's working at the school system, and what he does is he does a lot of filming of events at the school, and after the invasion of the Ukraine,

the Moscow wants proof of that they're joining the military, you know, they're joining the patriotic And so he's, he's, he's filming all these events, sending them to Moscow to prove that our school is also joining. And the kids are now, instead of making TikTok videos, they're practicing marching and, and the, playing the songs of the militaristic songs. Meanwhile, he's sending the tape to some colleague in, or not colleague, or someone unknown to him in Copenhagen and Denmark. And then at the end of the film, he gives this wonderful speech at the graduation. Now, his relations with his students had changed because he was viewed as sort of a peacenik. and yet the kids have bought into the militarism, right? That the, you know, we, the, the, the Ukrainians are, and had invaded Russia. They're nothing but a bunch of Nazis. I mean, they buy the company line. and then he sends the tape and then he disappears. And so when he shows up on Oscar night, wi the Oscar. Mr. Nobody is on the red carpet, but I thought it was, I thought it was a, I thought it was a nice film. It was a nice way dealing with the Russian invasion of the Ukraine,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 25:59
I thought it was fantastic and I think something that stuck with me was that in today's climate, we all face a moral choice, but luckily we can remember, and this was said in the film, that nobody is more powerful than you

MARK GIBNEY 26:18
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:18
think and that the power really does lie with the people. I thought the Oscar speech was inspiring. I'm so glad that was on a global stage.

MARK GIBNEY 26:30
Yeah. the, after he won, after the director won his speech. was it certainly the single best speech all night. And because he did say that, I mean, this proves that the power of the individual, I mean, you have a lot of stuff going on in your country. Right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:45
Yep.

MARK GIBNEY 26:45
A lot of people who have bought into, have bought into this. but here's one individual who stood up to the, the, the Russian war machine and, You know, Do your,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:00
And his name is Pavel Talitkin, because of his bravery, smuggling out those hard drives, you know, out of the country to collaborate with an American director, which his name is David Borenstein, who gave the great speech, and Borenstein lives in Copenhagen, but, you know, I it, it takes a village and it takes moral courage

MARK GIBNEY 27:23
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 27:23
and strength to be able to expose those atrocities happening.

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:27
is Mark, is, uh, Invictus on your list? what about South Africa? Nelson Mandela.

MARK GIBNEY 27:34
I actually don't remember. I, I kind of liked that movie. I, it's funny. I, that was

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:39
Yea.

MARK GIBNEY 27:39
Matt Damon. Right. And

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:42
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 27:42
Morgan Freeman

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:43
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 27:43
played. One of the problems I have is when I think of Mandela, I think

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:48
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 27:48
of

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:48
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 27:48
Morgan Freeman. Right. I mean, I thought his

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:51

Incredible.

MARK GIBNEY 27:52
portrayal was.

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:53
And, uh, I don't know if you ever saw the Charlie Rose, interview with Morgan Freeman. No. one of

MARK GIBNEY 28:00
No.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:00
the most powerful moments he, says to him, do you know about the Invictus, the, the poem And Morgan Freeman starts. Yeah. Yeah. And Charlie pushes toward him the, uh, the text. And Morgan

MARK GIBNEY 28:19
Hmm.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:19
Freeman said, uh, I don't need the text. And he goes on for whatever it is, like three minutes, four minutes, just reciting. and he said he actually had learned before the movie. And so it was

MARK GIBNEY 28:34
Okay.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:34
very powerful, uh, that, that

MARK GIBNEY 28:37
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:37
particular thing. And then I come to find the Oklahoma city bomber, McVeigh.

MARK GIBNEY 28:45
Timothy

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:45
that, that was Timothy McVeigh's favorite as well. Yeah. It lost a little bit of its luster.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:58

and Mark, for our listeners, I think one of the things about you in human rights is that you combine storytelling for your students and allow them to learn about international human rights through film, through the lens of incredibly talented documentarians, filmmakers, cinematographers.

Why do you think it is so unique and imperative to teach your students, human rights through film?

MARK GIBNEY 29:37
Well, I don't, you know, when I first started Meredith, I, I must say I was a bit sheepish. I thought it was kind of a- a cheap way of- cause I- I show- I don't assign it to them that they go home and watch. We watch it as a group. And as I say to my students, I've seen the I know what's happening in the film. I'm watching you watch the film, right? I'm watching you

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 30:02
Yes.

MARK GIBNEY 30:02
watch the film. I want to see your reaction to it. I think the reason I like film- and I do think I usually use- well, I- I- I- I was gonna say this summer. One semester, I'm teaching human rights. I did one animation that's Flea and the other one is that- a movie I've recommended to you, Sulei Story. B for the most part, they're documentaries. And I think what it is is that it's- it kind of removes the abstractness of it. I would think human rights can be very abstract. I mean, read an international convention on torture or whatever, and it's kind of- kind of cold-blooded. It's, you know, the state parties agree this, that, and the next thing. And so I think the film makes it, you know, what I say about human rights is that we're dealing human beings. And I think films brings out the human being. You know, I think- I'm trying to think of some of the films I've showed this semester. One that I've really liked was Put Your Soul in Your Hand and Walk. I don't know if you've seen that, but Put Your Soul in Your Hand and Walk, which consists of nothing FaceTime interviews between a- a re- a woman who lives in Paris, but she's from Iran, cannot go back to Iran. She'd been in prison when she was a teenager. She leaves the regime and has been living outside the country the rest of her life, can't visit her mother. She interviews this Palestinian woman who's living in Gaza. And the entire film is FaceTime interviews, and not even interviews, th conversations, really, that the two of them have. And the question is, well, what's happening? And you could hear the drones. You could hear the fighter bomber. And occasionally, the woman will show the destruction outside, that the entire Gaza city has been destroyed. I thought it was one thing to read about 70, 75,000 civilians dead. But in some ways, it's more impactful to see a person who you knew as a person, as a real human being, and a very vibrant human being, who is killed. I mean, and it was like almost every time, and the reporter said every time she would call, you know, she would initiate a FaceTime. Her fear was always that no one's going to answer, right? That no one is going to answer that. And then ultimately, one day, no one did answer. And she died. And again, I'm not so good with the names here. But it was a very powerful film. And it was, it gave, to my mind, sort of a human face to the 75,000 civilians dead in Gaza. I did. I thought it was. Not all of them

are, by the way. gory, but I, one of my favorite films, Collective, It's a, I think, a Romanian film, There's a certain category of film where you're thinking, I can't believe I'm I can't believe the level of corruption, right? The level of corruption in, in, in Romania. Of economic, social. The government has gotten the league with some kind of corporation, which is diluting all the medicine. two. That's being sold in all the hospitals. So there's a fire.At a nightclub. the nightclub is called Collective. And so, uh, like, 38 people die of the fire. That's where the film begins. Uh, ano, let's say, 50 people are hospitalized, and almost all of them die because the medicine that they had been given had been so diluted that it, it, it, it didn't disinfect. And so you have people dying of, of diseases from, you know, not the disinfectant not working. And all you get is one government cover up after another, after another, after another, to the point where you're thinking, does this ever end? Does this ever end? And, and it's, it a, it's a, it's a beautiful film, but it is depressing beyond and then at the end of the film, you finally do have someone who's the minister of health, who looks like he's straightening things out. They're finally going to address their, their problems, and then the political party that he's part of gets voted out of office, and the people who will be coming back into office are the same bastards who had done this initially. And that's how the

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:07
was

MARK GIBNEY 35:07
film

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:07
there ever

MARK GIBNEY 35:08
ends.

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:08
a film made about the, uh, Flint water crisis?

MARK GIBNEY 35:13
Uh, I don't know. I don't, I don't, I'm trying to think of the, the, um, the book I've read about that. Me, because she does a lot of work in Flint, but it was, um, by the doctor that took the governor. I don't know if there has ever been a film about

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 35:31
there is, it's called the Flint Deadly Water. and it was, it is by PBS Frontline.

MARK GIBNEY 35:37
okay.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 35:38

it's available on PBS and on YouTube. really, really well done. and the sad thing is Flint still doesn't have healthy drinking water. I mean, that's, what's

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:48
Hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 35:48
mind

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:48
Hmm.

MARK GIBNEY 35:48
Hmm.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 35:49
boggling about this. Yeah. And, and Mark you have watched so many human rights films. You've been a judge on international competitions on panels. Is there one or two films throughout the years that is really important to you that you can, you catch yourself coming

MARK GIBNEY 36:09
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 36:09
back to?

MARK GIBNEY 36:10
Well, I'll tell you one, and I just showed it yesterday, that, uh, a film called Darwin's Nightmare. so, you know, one of the things I'm interested in, in human rights is this whole notion of, of state obligations and what obligations do states have and where, and where they have these obligations, right? And the, th old model was pretty much a territorial approach that a state's obligations extend as, in terms of, as, in terms of its national territory, but not beyond that. And so one of the things I think I have tried to promote, in fact, I know I've tried to promote in human rights is the whole notion that territory matters, but maybe it doesn't matter as much as we have allowed it to, to Darwin's Nightmare is about, it takes place in this, this poor village Tanzania on the shores of Lake Victoria. And as the film goes on, you see all these airplanes that are landing, right? They're big, big, huge airplanes And everyone's asking, well, you know, the, the, uh, director Hubert Sopper is asking, well, what, what do they, oh, no, no, they're empty. Everyone's saying they're empty, they're empty. And then they come and they take fish away. They take this Nile perch. Well, a Nile perch is a fish that is non-indigenous. It's killing the lake, but for the locals, they catch it. They then sell it. And what they live on are the entrails, right? They can't afford to buy the fish. So the fish is filleted, cut up, filleted, and flown out on these planes, flown to Europe. And then as the film goes on.

The background, you find out that the World Food Program has said that Tanzania is experiencing famine. And then as the film also goes on, you realize that these planes are not at all. Coming in. Also. That are going towards, a various African. Civil conflicts. And so to my. It's emblematic of how. A couple of things. One is that we're not that far removed from some of the horrible things that In the world. We're not. We like to think we are, but we're not. And this, to my mind, is a film that underscores that. and I said that in a little discussion with my students afterwards, my favorite scene is they have the, the trade ministers are on a veranda and they're taught, they're very self-satisfied that, you know, that, fish exports are 25% of Tanzania's foreign exports and all that. And they're very proud and, and all this stuff. And then the camera goes from the meeting of the ministers to all of a sudden, we're now looking at the street children that are crippled and stuff like that. Orphans, the street children who are sniffing glue to try to put themselves to sleep. So whatever horrible things that happened to them that they know will happen, they're completely oblivious to. And it's that film, I think, if there's one film, and I say to my students, you're, you're going to think I'm And I

Fantastic film. It's Because I think Has so many of the human rights things. At first, it looks like it's just horrible. Happening, people dying of age. great idea. And then it's not close to us. It has nothing to do with our own

And then you realize it has a lot to do with. We're eating food from a country experiencing a We're shipping arms to a country that is. is then selling the weapons to go to various countries in Africa. To fuel and to fight. these civil conflicts. And that's one, One film I think that I have really enjoyed, for that reason. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:16
Well, and I saw Mark that it was nominated also for an Oscar in 2006.

MARK GIBNEY 40:21
Yes. And I don't think, you know what it lost to?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:24
Who?

MARK GIBNEY 40:24
March of the penguins.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:26
an important film, but

MARK GIBNEY 40:29
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:29
different.

MARK GIBNEY 40:31
But I did think the penguins were pretty good. But that was one that I liked. I think I also must say, I like the lives of others.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:38
yes.

MARK GIBNEY 40:38
I mean, it doesn't all have to be human suffering. But I think the lives of others about growing up. What, what sort of surveillance? B I think for so many of us, it's that we can look at film. We could look at what I call distant horribles. Torture, executions. What we were talking about earlier with Iran. But I think in some ways, an even, maybe even more subtle, at least a more insidious way of human rights violations is on display in that film. So you have the Stasi agent who's listening in to this director and his girlfriend who's an actress. and it's, it's sort of how you have something that's not in society because. Spying on society. Right. It's everyone. What he else. It's. Violations. Different. I think I've always, and it's just a. humans. Perb

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:40
1984

MARK GIBNEY 41:40
film.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:42
East Germany.

MARK GIBNEY 41:43
That.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:44
Well, it came out in 2006, but the time

MARK GIBNEY 41:46
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:46
period is 1984 East Berlin. and the secret police of the former East Germany, with, as you said, the Stasi, operatives, that was a great film. And you're right. I think, you know, what is so intriguing about being able to teach human rights through film is there's such a wide breadth of work and we all have different

MARK GIBNEY 42:09
Yeah. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:10
scenarios and plots and the common ground is morals, human decency, reckoning's,

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:16
I had a book in my Penn series about the Stasis. And I'm curious, this made it into the movie. one of people you know, he'd been like a when he went into his file. he realized. They had all this information on his movements. I mean, he would be secretly meeting with things and that there was only one who could have that information. And it was his wife.

MARK GIBNEY 42:48
I was,

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:48
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 42:49
that was my guess. Yeah, and I- and I thought that came- that was done perfectly in the- in the film. It was about this typewriter that someone was type- and they all- the government even knew who had what kind of typewriter, I mean, we're talking a surveillance that was at such an extent like that every move was- and again, it was people spying on- even their spouses. I mean, it was- it was a superb film.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:19
and Mark last year, you published an article in my dad's human rights quarterly titled taking human rights obligations more seriously. and in that you discuss that international law should move toward a system of graded responsibility for human rights

MARK GIBNEY 43:39
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:39
violations, rather than treating said violations as a simple yes or no.

MARK GIBNEY 43:45
Yeah. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 43:46
Could you share with the listeners? What does that truly mean in practice?

MARK GIBNEY 43:51
Well, I- I think, for one thing, your dad would know this,that you have to maintain a certain level of optimism in human rights because it's- you don't get many good days, but to my mind, one of the good days was was Gambia of all countries, Gambia bringing an action against

Myanmar in 2019 for the genocide in Myanmar. And you think to yourself, well, that's a strange. Here's this West African country, that's a state party of the Genocide Convention, and they're bringing an action against a country probably- probably 3,000 to 4,000 to 5,000 miles away. I mean, I'm- geography, I don't know, but we're talking- we're not talking that- whatever genocide is occurring in Myanmar is going to have any kind of effect on the population or the government of Gambia. But Gambia says, well, no, we're a state party to the Genocide Convention, and we have an obligation under the treaty to prevent genocide. And we have an obligation under the treaty to prevent genocide. And this is what we are doing. We're filing an action before the International Court of Justice, saying that Myanmar is engaged in genocide. And we have an obligation under the treaty to the início. And in 2023, we had the similar thing with South Africa bringing an action against Israel. And so you had a situation where, again,South Africa is not directly affected by the genocide Israel. But they're saying, and they say the same thing, that we know this is a serious charge that we're making. But we're making, but we are a state party to the genocide convention, and we have to do something. And our something here is we're filing an action. And so I thought to myself,this is something that other countries should do, because it's not enough to just say, well, we don't commit genocide. You know, we don't torture. as a state party to various human rights treaties, you have to do more. You have to do something to respond to horrible things. And so what I tried to say is, okay, if I applaud and I'm not only applaud, but I think both Gambia and South Africa had a legal obligation to do something in the face of genocide. What does that mean for the other state parties that haven't done anything? Right? I mean, what do we, how do we describe what they have, have, have not done anything? What do we, how do we, how do we describe what they have, have not done? They're certainly not engaged in genocide, but they've really haven't done anything to prevent genocide. I mean, what, what, what it's almost like this, this category of, I mean, listen, in both instances, a number of states joined in. Right? A number of states joined in. Right? A number of states joined in. I don't have the complete list of all the states. But it's, but a number of states joined in, but a number of states joined in. But to my mind, it's, this wasn't,what's important about this is that states have both, one recognized having certain obligations. And they're having obligations to vis-a-vis state, other states, and to other people in other states.

So I think it was important. And I think it was important, and I think it was also important that other states joined in. But it's, to my mind, the whole point of the article is to have states rethink what their obligations are. It's not, to my mind, it's not enough to just say, well, we don't torture, or we don't commit genocide. So you have obligations that extend beyond that. And that was the point, that was really what I was trying to get at, which is, we need to rethink what we mean about state responsibility. Because we do it either or. We either we don't torture, or we do torture, or we commit genocide, or we don't commit genocide. But there's this large gray area, where states that are bystander nations, Need to get involved. They need to get involved. And one of the pieces, Bert, you remember that you published quite recently was by Siegfried Scogli about the duty to prevent, that I think the title is prevention is better than the cure, or, you know, that expression, because I do think that we haven't paid enough attention to preventing human rights violations. It's been very reactive, right? Human rights has always been Human rights violations occur, and then we, you know, we respond to that or

not respond to it. That I think the prevention is something that we ought to be thinking about, right? And that's what I was trying to

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:40
I

MARK GIBNEY 48:40
achieve

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:40
don't

MARK GIBNEY 48:40
in

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:40
know

MARK GIBNEY 48:40
that.

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:40
I've ever had this discussion with you, I don't know if it's an apocryphal story or not, but it's, it's the way that taught the genocide convention and the history of the U.S . ratification. um, I was part of a small group, was pushing for the ratification the genocide convention And, uh, Richard Lillich was my mentor, um, and the belief was that we wanted to get human rights conventions ratified. Um, but the belief was that genocide had to go first because if you couldn't get the United States to agree that genocide was a violation, there was no way they were going to ratify the civil and political covenant and the economic, uh, social and cultural covenant. so it gets ratified, by Reagan in his second term. And, and the

MARK GIBNEY 49:41
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 49:41
story that I've told, again, I don't know if it's accurate or not, but it plausible. Um, was said to the, conservative governor of California who led his, uh, re-election campaign. uh, what would he like as a political favor, basically? And

MARK GIBNEY 50:03
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:03
the

MARK GIBNEY 50:03
Okay.

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:03
fellow said, I'd like to see the genocide convention ratified and to Reagan that didn't sound like, y know, much. And so he goes out and gives a speech saying he's going to ratify the, genocide convention and Jesse Helms goes bananas, in the Senate. but that he, he does this, um, the key to it is that last three letters of governor's name is IAN, Armenian names. And IAN, uh, and the guy's name

MARK GIBNEY 50:41
Oh,

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:41
is Deukmejian

MARK GIBNEY 50:41
okay.

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:42
And, : The

MARK GIBNEY 50:44
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:44
genocide of 1915 the Turkish, genocide. was still a burning issue in the Armenian that supposedly is the reason the US goes on and ratifies the, uh, t, the genocide convention.

MARK GIBNEY 51:02
I find it quite fascinating because I, I, I must say I was putting together the other day, US ratifications of various things. And that, and that, and that did strike me. I didn't realize that it was during, during Reagan's

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:15
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 51:15
second term

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:16
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 51:16
and that

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:16
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 51:16
just did not

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:17
And,

MARK GIBNEY 51:17
make

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:18
and,

MARK GIBNEY 51:18
sense.

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:18
and that broke the log jam,

MARK GIBNEY 51:20
Okay. In a way, but of course it hasn't been, you know, I think quite recently the United States has been, has really turned away, like we began this, has turned away from

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:31
Oh,

MARK GIBNEY 51:32
international

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:32
absolutely. Oh,

MARK GIBNEY 51:32
law.

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:33
absolutely. But even, even then part of, part of the reason, and again, I was sort of this small group people pushing for ratification is our strategy didn't make a hell of a lot of sense. So what we were saying was, Well, you know, we should ratify these treaties, because the U.S .

has a great on human rights and, it's basically symbolic to, show the international community our support. Knowing full once they ratified them, we would then be looking for a litigation that we could bring using the treaties. I say not a particularly effective strategy because when you're trying to get busy senators to, know, invest time, and, and, know, political capital to suggest that these are just symbolic and they aren't going to have effect a winning strategy, if you will,

MARK GIBNEY 52:31
You know, we had talked earlier about, about Rwanda, though, I mean, again, the U. S., after becoming a state party, realized that genocide meant you had to do something, even though that something was always quite vague, right? But, but, but, bu, but to my mind, the, this case of Bosnia versus Serbia from 2007, because the, the, the, the real shocker here is the court says, well, no, Serbia didn't engage in genocide, nor did it aid and assist. You're thinking, you're kidding me. How did you possibly come to that conclusion? But it's the other part of the opinion, what they're saying, where the court says explicitly that every one of the state parties has to do everything in its power prevent genocide. And it's that that I try to draw upon here is that the language there is so absolute that you've got to do it. The state has to do it, even if other states aren't meeting their obligations, even if the effort itself would be futile. I mean, it is almost like they're making up for the first half of the opinion, which is to say, no, they haven't committed genocide or aid and assist genocide. Oh, I that was that was a real shocker. But OK, but I'll take the trade off. I'll take the trade off. No, they didn't commit genocide, b they had an obligation to prevent and they failed to do so.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 54:01
And Mark, if you allow us, what I actually wanted to talk to you about is since 1984, you've directed the Political Terror Scale, also known as PTS, Measuring Human Rights. This, I think, is an important tool. And I wanted to educate our listeners who are unfamiliar with it, if you can explain what the PTS measures and why it matters.

MARK GIBNEY 54:28
It's pretty easy. uh, it's simply a scale of one to five where we meaning a whole series of coders to be just me. But now we have probably about 15 people involved. And we read the annual reports of the State Department and Amnesty. International and Human Rights Watch. And then the scale of one to five, one would be a country like Canada, Switzerland and New Zealand.Five would be Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo. We're talking some of the real hell holes, North Korea, like that. And so, we just, you know, read the report and give it a score. And we try to make sure that, we're accurate. Right? But it doesn't, you know, you got to read between the lines. particularly. Well, one of the things we're finding is that, the State Department reports now have changed markedly. Right? One of the things that they have reduced here is that, uh, is that since Trump has come into office, that the State Department reports are almost half of the size they used to be. Entire categories that have been removed from that. But one of the surprises was that they still report uh, uh, has put on four things. And they still report on four things. One would be torture, summary executions, disappearances, and political imprisonment. Those have pretty much stayed the same, perhaps not with as

much detail. Now, why it matters is that there's something to my mind, there's almost something magical about numbers. You could talk about that a certain country has, has, you know, uh, has gross and systematic human rights violations. But, it seems to be that if you assign a number, then on the political terror scale, North Korea gets a five, the Sudan gets a five. Brazil gets a four. The only time I have ever been, um, criticized was the Brazilian ambassador who, to the U. S., who writes me a letter saying, "I'm offended, you have Brazil as a level four." Which is the second category. My response

to take- The reports- Brazil. Brazil. say, you know, you, you, you, you, you're talking thousands of people who are killed by the police. That's why Brazil gets a four. But there's just something about numbers here that had, there's a power in numbers that I think just saying that a country has a poor human rights condition. But the quantoid, uh, types in political science, use this with some regularity. They, they do. I, I'm more of a lawyer than- So I produce something that I really don't use. Well, one of the reasons developed this thing was I kept hearing about asylum abuse. Asylum abuse. There's, there's- Asylum abuse. So, I extended the political terror scale, which, Had been 39 countries. To the whole 195 countries. And I looked to see. Who are asylums? What countries do they come from? They overwhelmingly come from countries Level four and level five. Level five. The countries that I would say. The hell holes. Right. Level five. From the inner rings of hell. Level four is one of the outer rings of hell. but to my mind- This whole notion of asylum abuse. Was completely fallacious. Because the people who are applying for asylum, whether it's in the United States. Or in Holland. Or the UK. Came from exactly the countries that you would think they would come from. They're coming from the world's hell holes. But for some reason, being able to assign a number to it, you know, that in the United States, let's say in the 1980s, something like 95% of the asylum applicants came from a level four or level five country, yeah, this is not an example. This is not asylum abuse. It was the U. S. government that was abusing the system because they were denying the asylum claims from El Salvador and Honduras and Guatemala, but accepting them at that time from Nicaragua. So that's why the political terror scale, I think, has been useful for human rights scholars, because it can, it can assign a number here, but it's pretty elementary, right? It's pretty elementary. Go to the website,know, political terror scale. org and they have data going back to 1976 and again, three different sources, State Department, Amnesty International and

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:18
I

MARK GIBNEY 59:18
Human

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:18
don't know if

MARK GIBNEY 59:18
Rights

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:18
you

MARK GIBNEY 59:18
War.

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:18
saw last State Department's no longer going to be doing it.

MARK GIBNEY 59:23
So they have gotten out of the business completely?

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:26
Yes.

MARK GIBNEY 59:27
Oh, I hadn't seen that.

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:28
Yep. Trump, Trump said we have no business commenting on, uh, other countries'

MARK GIBNEY 59:32
Yep.

BERT LOCKWOOD 59:32
human rights records.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 59:35
Right, because we'll start a war because another country is killing protesters. Oh, but you're killing peaceful protesters in your own country. So,

MARK GIBNEY 59:47
yeah, I, uh, I, I'm not, I'm not shocked. I mean, they had severely reduced the coverage, but to get out of the game, I thought it was. I thought it was, I thought it was, goes back to 1972.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:04
and, and, and, and, well. It

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:05
No?

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:05
is. It is.

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:07
Yeah. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:08
I don't think he

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:09
Uh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:09
follows any

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:09
Rubio

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:10
mandates.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:10
backed him.

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:12
even in terms of the shoes he wears, right?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:18
Mark, there's a whole video out there of these conservative Republicans wearing shoes too big for them and them, like, flopping around.

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:28
That I haven't seen. You're going to have to send

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:31
It

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:31
me that one.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:32
is so funny. They can't walk in their own shoes because they're trying to wear too big of shoes. Come on. a clown show. Mark, can I ask a

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:42
ye,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:43
question?

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:43
yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:43
Does the United States currently have, like, what's our score on the PTS scale?

MARK GIBNEY 1:00:51
Well, I always say, if I give a talk on this in another country in particular, I'm always asked two questions. One was, what score did the United States get? And the second question, what's the worst country in the world? That the State Department does every single country in the world, except for the So I've had students do projects where they. Like the United States. But the United States, in terms of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, generally gets about a three. And the three is because of police brutality. The number of people who were killed by police officers, it usually hovers between two and three. I mean, to get into a four category, you usually need hundreds, if not thousands, of dead people. And then, and not to sound crass, but a level five would be all hell breaking loose. And you're talking about sort of the Rwandas of the world, the Sudans and stuff like that. The second one is in terms of what's the worst country is I think, w, we only go up to five, right? We don't go. So Rwanda would get a five. Sudan would get a five. North Korea would get a five. But there are differences between those countries. But I said, if you want to see a country that has had nothing, nothing but human suffering from the mid-1970s on, it's Afghanistan. This is a country that has never, has never had a year where it seems like we're finally going to have some degree of peace and security. I mean, it just seems unknown to Afghanistan. And so I would say, if you look at it, I think this past year, we had something like 13 countries that were level five. And that's, I think, an all-time high. I mean, I really do. I think we've, usually we have single digits, maybe four or five or six countries that are at that very high level. In this past, and when I say this past year, I mean we haven't started coding for 2025 yet because the reports haven't come out, and I guess the State Department report is not gonna

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:03:07
Mm-hmm.

MARK GIBNEY 1:03:07
come out. Okay, so, but Amnesty will still come out with the report in the Human Rights Watch, so we're talking about data from 2024,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:03:16
okay.

MARK GIBNEY 1:03:16

right, because the reports haven't come out yet so that we can code But, but I thought the '13' was, and that was using the State Department, but 13 was abnormally high, That when I could, I off the top of- I couldn't tell you what those

13 were, but that's disturbing to

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:03:37
Me too.

MARK GIBNEY 1:03:37
that is, you know- Right now, we think of Iran. We think of- Uh, we think of Gaza. But in- The number of countries . . . that are suffering from the very highest levels of political terror. I should explain the listeners here that we use the term terror when we were talking about state terror. So now that term means terrorism, right? And it's non-state actors, but the terror we're looking at is state terror. The degree to which a government terrorizes its own people.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:04:14
Is Rwanda on that current list?

MARK GIBNEY 1:04:16
No, and Rwanda is quite the opposite now. I mean, it's sort of levels of repression and oppression, that it's gone from, you know, the genocide of Europe 1984, I believe, right? You know, and I do sometimes have to apologize because we don't look at repression. So earlier we were talking about- the lives of others and- the depiction of life under East Germany. the so-called communist bloc countries of that era actually scored well on the political terror scale because the whole population was afraid to do anything, right? There was just this fear, this- this- the surveillance state that there weren't many dead bodies. There weren't. There wasn't much in the- in the form- I mean, yeah, some dissidents are going to be arrested and tortured, but it was societies that- and I use the term societies loosely because to my mind, they were not societies. society means some kind of communal undertaking. It was every man, woman, or child for him or herself spying on spouses, spying on kids, kids spying their parents, and so on here. But they never had- the political terror scale never reflected really how bad the human rights situation in those countries happened to

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:05:39
I

MARK GIBNEY 1:05:40
be.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:05:40
want add a footnote Uh, the Rwandan government is still repressive against- ... dissidents and- ... you the-

MARK GIBNEY 1:05:48
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:05:48
the dissidents. ... and with allies in, the Congo. ... a good deal

MARK GIBNEY 1:05:56
yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:05:56
uh, sexual violence and, uh, armed conflict, uh, situations um, are stirred up by the Rwandan government.

MARK GIBNEY 1:06:03
Uh, yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:03
Yeah, and the genocide was, just to make sure, 1994.

MARK GIBNEY 1:06:07
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:09
Also, for our listeners, and Mark, I don't know on your scale how into the weeds you get on human rights abuses, LGBTQIA is very oppressed in Rwanda as well. keep seeing more and more things happen over there. In the 13 countries, I imagine Yemen must be on there.

MARK GIBNEY 1:06:32
yeah, I mean, I'm, I, I'm guessing that, I'm guessing Sudan, North Korea's always on it, Afghanistan's gotta be on

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:06:40
Mm-hmm.

MARK GIBNEY 1:06:40
that. it's funny, the one country that has always posed problems has been Israel. Because there's been pushback with Israel. so Israel is the only country in the world we give more than one score, right? Because if you look at the 1967 borders, then Israel looks pretty good, right? the, the Palestinians who are being held in prisons are not being, or at least for a period of time, we're not being held within the 67 borders. And so we would give one score for when they occupied, the Israelis occupied Gaza. We give Israel in Gaza, Israel in the West Bank, Israel in 1967, then Hamas in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. but for the most part, this, to my mind, shows that this whole notion I said before, the territory sometimes matters too much. So how do you score Russia? You look at the events within the Russian national

borders, which is not good, right? Particularly in Chechnya, but it's not horrible. Or do you look at Russia's action in the Ukraine? Well, if you look at that, and when I'm asked that question about the United States, right, what score does the United States get? I usually turn that question around and say, okay, you tell me. Now, we're looking, we tend to look at the human rights performance within the continental United States. Okay. Do we add Guantanamo Bay? Do we add the Bagram Air Force Base? Do we add on Abu Ghraib? Do we look at the United States acting in the world? And if you do that, you go from a country that gets, you know, police brutality domestically, a two or a three, to if you extend the geographic of America's actions in the world, it begins to look like one of the worst human rights abusing countries in the world.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:08:47
Mm-hmm.

MARK GIBNEY 1:08:48
I'd say that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:08:49
if we combined on a domestic level the prison system and also now with ICE,

MARK GIBNEY 1:08:57
Yeah. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:08:58
I think our, I personally think our score would be quite high.

MARK GIBNEY 1:09:03
Well, I'd be kind of curious to see how Amnesty and Human Rights Watch handle this. I mean, i some ways, it's a very blunt instrument. It's blunt in the sense that as horrified as we have been, that probably going to be a three. It's going to be a three because of ICE brutality, the police brutality. But we can count, we know people who have been killed, right? We even have names of the people who've been killed by ICE. Whereas in other countries, in Brazil, we're talking 1,500 people who remain nameless,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:09:40
Right.

MARK GIBNEY 1:09:40
right? 1,500 people. We know the 75,000 civilians dead in Gaza. But we have a film like Put Your Hand in Your Heart. We're messing up the name here. But we know of this one individual. And we can associate the horrors with that individual. At the same time, we know this was one of 75,000.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:03

was going to mention. I, I discovered about two o'clock last night. That human rights watch is now doing podcasts. I

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:11
Okay.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:12
didn't realize. they have five. it's different sections that different parts of the eager to listen in on that.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:22
you remember that book we did on networks,

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:24
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:25
Bert? And then I interviewed you. But Todd Landman has a, a podcast in the

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:31
Oh,

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:32
UK.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:32
okay.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:33
Oh.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:33
And And that was what his chapter was about, was about the podcast and how he uses it as a means of creating this

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:42
Mere, he's Nottingham.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:45
I was just going to ask for our listeners if we could tell

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:47
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:47
them who Todd is.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:49
he's a human rights professor now at the University of Nottingham. he was, at Essex.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:55
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:56
Okay.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:56
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:57
Oh, fantastic.

MARK GIBNEY 1:10:58
And this chapter here, and of course, it's the best chapter here, is the one that I interview your

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:04
did

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:05
dad.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:05
in

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:05
That is, it's just called An Interview with Burt Lockwood. That's rather, not all that sexy, is it?

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:14
...because

...same to you, Mark.

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:18
is, I guess I chose that. Human Rights Networks from Analog to Digital is the name Todd's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:11:27
Okay.

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:27
thing. So

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:27
Oh,

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:28
the book is,

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:28
so,

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:28
well,

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:29
so you, you think that's... ...sexier than an interview

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:32
with... ...I

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:33
think...

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:34
I think actually an interview with Bert Lockwood is about as sexy as you get. Okay? I think, and Bert, I have images of you in a speedo at a

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:11:45
...to

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:45
basketball game.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:11:48
yeah, Mark, you're always so generous to Um, and again, I said it earlier, but I think you're one of the coolest professors out there in human rights and combining my passion of storytelling through

MARK GIBNEY 1:11:59
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:00

film, media, journalism. You know, it, it, it takes a lot of courage and bravery to do a lot of these documentaries that you and I love

MARK GIBNEY 1:12:08
Yeah. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:10
really does. just, you know, I was just speaking to one of the producers all static and noise about the Uygher community with Jewher Ilham. the producer, Janice and I were catching And it's just humbling how little funding there is in these powerful human rights documentaries. So the fact that you're able to expose them to your students in that generation, I'm, really proud of it. And I'd love to come sit in on one of your classes one day. I get to do that with my dad sometimes.

MARK GIBNEY 1:12:40
We have fun.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:42
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 1:12:42
I'm not human rights. Human rights is not fun at all.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:45
Yeah.

MARK GIBNEY 1:12:45
No, no, no, it's not fun at But civil liberties is fun. Intro to law is fun. You know, the undergraduate law experience is different from the law school experience. It really is.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:57
That's such an interesting, you get, you get that. Cause my dad gets a lot of questions

MARK GIBNEY 1:13:00
yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:13:00
sometimes on the podcast and he has to like remind people that he's kind of in a silo with

MARK GIBNEY 1:13:05
yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:13:05
his students, you know, that are

MARK GIBNEY 1:13:06
yeah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:13:07
what dad year two and three. And they're very specific students. They're human rights students. They come to his seminars to learn international human rights and women's rights. But it's cool that you get to also get to know the undergrad that are kind of outside that.

MARK GIBNEY 1:13:21
just And they're trying to figure out what to do with their lives. I mean, I do say, I think that's the best thing I do. It's not anything in the classroom. It's, uh, uh, just before we broadcast, I had a student in here. We're going over, you know, what do you hope to do with, with your life? And, uh, I find that quite fulfilling. I always tell my students that my mother always said to me that I was a fourth grade teacher and my mother was right. I am, I am actually a fourth grade teacher who happens to be teaching at the university. But I think I have the soul of a fourth grade teacher. Right. Kids are trying to make their way in the world. And that's one of the things I enjoy doing.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:14:03
And I bet that's why your students really love you.

MARK GIBNEY 1:14:05
They They either love me or hate me. There is no in between, you know, I never get a three on, on, on student evaluations, you know, somewhere in between you either love or hate. And so the average may be three, but it's one in a five.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:14:22
Well,

MARK GIBNEY 1:14:22
And,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:14:23
well,

MARK GIBNEY 1:14:23
uh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:14:23
at least it's not a political terror scale. So,

MARK GIBNEY 1:14:26
no, that's right. That's right. That's right. That's true. That is true.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:14:29
Mark, This has been wonderful.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:14:34
My dad and I wanna thank Mark for joining us on the podcast, and for the decades he has dedicated to advancing human rights around the world. Mark and I share a deep love for human rights films, and we often exchange recommendations and reflect on the stories that stay with us long after the credits roll. Our shared passion is a reminder that storytelling is not just about awareness, it's about connection, empathy, and community building. We'd love to hear from our listeners, so feel free to add a comment or send us an email about your own favorite human rights films and documentaries. Our email is humanrightsconversations at gmail.com. And if you found value in today's episode, we invite you to rate, review, and subscribe to Human Rights Conversations Across Generations Than you for being part of our growing community. And we hope you will our show with a friend, a colleague, your family, and more. Thank you for tuning in and for continuing to stand with us in the pursuit of human rights for all.