

## **Human Rights Conversations Across Generations**

**Sara Kehaulani Goo episode**

**Transcript of edited conversation**

**Originally Released October 2026**

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04

Hi, welcome to our podcast, Human Rights, Conversations Across Generations. I'm Meredith Lockwood, founder of Lockwood Creative, a purpose-driven creative agency. And I'm here with my dad.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:16

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:26

Together, we are your father-daughter co-hosts.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:29

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:35

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

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:43

We bridge the past and the present, making complex human rights issues more approachable and understandable.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:50

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:03

Thanks for joining us today. And for any newcomers. Welcome to our podcast. My dad and I are joined by journalist and author Sarah. whose new memoir, *K*, begins with the story of her families ancestral land in Hana, Maui. It expands into a deeply personal exploration of family, native Hawaiian history, land, and the responsibility across generations.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:30

Sarah has spent more than two decades as a journalist and newsroom leader. She began her career at the Wall Street Journal and went on to hold reporting and leadership roles at the Washington Post, NPR and Axios. Today, she is president of the Washington Post Creator Network, where she leads the Post's work with independent creators.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:55

After a career spent investigating and telling other people's stories, Sarah's reporting lens turns inward. Her story centers on more than 90 acres of land, the remaining portion of an original 990-acre grant that has been in her family for more than 175 years. But in 2019, a nearly 500% increase in property taxes raised an urgent question. Could her family afford to keep their land?

BERT LOCKWOOD 2:25

the heart of Sarah's story is the Hawaiian concept of Kuleana, a word that speaks to responsibility and obligation. Together, we explore what are the central questions of her book. What do we owe those who before us and those who will come after?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:43

That question carries us through the history of Hawaii that many of us were never taught. The realities facing Native Hawaiians today and Sarah's own journey to understand what it means to carry her family's story forward. let's welcome Sarah to our show.

nice to meet you.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 3:04

Nice to meet you. Than for having me.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:06

Thanks for joining

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 3:08

I love that you guys do this together. That's awesome.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:11

I almost emailed you to see if you wanted to invite your dad to

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 3:15

Sarah,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:15

be. Hello guests. But then I was like, well, I know we're going to also talk about the world of journalism as well as your book. But if your dad ever wants to join

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 3:24

us

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:25

for a fellow father daughter duo, because I know in your dad was really central to you getting to write this book.

Sarah, I thought what would be kind of for listeners kick us off. book. I was wondering if we could teach our listeners some of the Hawaiian that you shared in the I have a couple be obviously the start, kuleana, which means responsibility and obligation. I was also wondering if you could teach the saying about taking care of the land.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 3:57

Sure. Yes. I use in my book, a commonly heard phrase in Hawaii, which is malama ika'aina. And malama is just to break it down, really means to care for. Um, so you hear people will say malama pono, which means to kind of take care of yourself or find your balance, I think is more literally the translation of Um, and, uh, ika'aina is just referring to the land. but what it actually means is, um, speaks to the kind of reciprocal relationship that native Hawaiian people have with their land. And so implied in that phrase, malama ika'aina, it is about referring to take care of the land and the land takes care of you. And so it is um, importance of when you think of an island people who survived in kind of isolation in the middle of the ocean, that was central to their survival. It wasn't just a nice concept. And, you know, you know, you had to take care of, know, you had to take care of, um, the land, make sure that you had, and it didn't actually malign. Ina doesn't even necessarily mean physical land that we walk on. It actually means that which feeds us. So, uh, Ina could be referred to the ocean. It could referred the streams, to the shoreline. it is about taking care of our environment because if we fish too much in one area, there's not enough for that next season. right? And so it is about being aware both kind of, uh, land's capability to give, but also knowing what the limit is of how much we take.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:37

That's really beautiful. Um, my dad and I thought it would also be a really nice start to have you talk about your

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 5:45

my dad, his name is Dennis, actually. he grew up in Southern California, from a very traditional big Hawaiian family of, uh, one of eight brothers and sisters. And, my grandparents, uh, both grew up in Hawaii, but moved to California after World War II, when my grandfather worked on the ballistic missile system in Southern California. So, that said, my dad was raised and I was raised with very deep Hawaiian traditions. Um, and, what that looked like was, you know, Hawaiian food, hula that my aunties danced and practiced, a lot of Hawaiian music, in the house. And, you know, part of our, know, familiar backdrop, if you will. And, also just a deep connection to Hawaii and our family that still live there. So, a lot of extended relatives, that we would visit. And then later on, my grandparents actually were able to return to Hawaii. And, um, so I think my father really serves in this book as, you know, the kind of patriarch of the family, who is kind of after my grandparents pass away, you know, carries on that torch of, know, fulfilling his own parents, wishes and values and connection to the islands. And, and that, for our family, really connected through land that our ancestor had received many over a century ago. And then, was still in our family. And so, my dad, I think, is, um, a guide to me in this book, for that cultural connection. And, know, sense of just, like, not just cultural

values, but, you know, values around, the central theme of the book, which is about what do we owe those who come before us and those who come after us.

BERT LOCKWOOD 7:31

when I was in Washington, thought it something of a unique city where, if you ask people where they were from... They almost never said Washington. I mean, even though they lived there, they would identify it was someplace else. I'm curious, is there a Hawaiian community in, D. C.?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 7:51

There is, actually. And um, Hawaii you know, sent many of its native sons and daughters abroad as kind of a tradition for many years. But today, I think remains to be true. But there's also, know, tradition of a lot of people leaving to pursue a career or university. And, you know, there's a hope that they'll learn and then kind of return and apply what they've learned to, their hometown or island in some way. but as a result of that, along with, unfortunately, a lot of just high cost of living in Hawaii, it's become very hard for people to return. So, as a result, more native Hawaiian people actually live outside of Hawaii, than on the islands. And that's true as of 2020, at least from what we know of the 2020 census tells us. So, in a lot of communities, more concentrated on the West Coast, for sure. Texas, Colorado, California, Oregon, Washington is more common. But also in Washington, D. C. I was able to connect with and it's a community here in a Halau, which is called a hula school, or place of learning, the cultural connection. And a combination of people who are native Hawaiian and found themselves here for careers in the military federal government or journalism or politics. but it's also people who grew up in Hawaii and just have that connection and miss home because culturally, as you know, it so very different from the continental United States.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:25

do you have friends that have the, uh, Hawaiian background?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 9:31

Well, they, they know people through the Halau. I would say like in their school, it's very rare. You know, my, my daughter got excited. She met somebody for the first time and who, has a, you know, Hawaiian background, but that's so rare out here. I think there's, you know, on the East Coast, it's just a know, kind of, a less frequent connection.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:50

Yeah.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 9:51

it's just about getting somewhere. and in the distance. I think there's desire to know um, but I think the community here is, decent size. It's still small when you compare it to like, you know, the West So, one of the things I loved was through the process of connecting with my culture was, to be able to, sign up my kids for a program at the Kamehameha schools in Hawaii, which, um, are dedicated to the education of Native Americans. Hawaiian children. they are able to

participate in an immersion program that was designed to be for children across the world who are Native Hawaiian and spend of time in summer camp, if you will, just practicing their culture, getting to know and immersing themselves in things like hula, in oli or chanting, or even just outrigger canoeing. And so that was the first time that I able to see my kids with other Native Hawaiian kids. And it was Quite amazing, quite emotional, actually, for me to see. And for them,

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:54

Oh, wonderful.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 10:55

my dad and I really enjoyed reading that part of the story Sara, I also really appreciated your vulnerability when you were taking Hulu dance classes. trying to figure out that balance with your knees and how to sway your hips and know that you were going to perform on also, being able to bring Silas and Chloe, your son and daughter, to do different performances with them saw you as a parent going through transition and growth, being able to drop your kids off in Hawaii at that immersion camp then letting them be on their own for a week. then you getting to go to the ceremony and see their own growth. That was such a wonderful multi-generational experience for you and your family. Absolutely.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 11:37

Oh, yeah, thank you. I'm glad that you enjoyed that. I think that, know, as a journalist, I'm not really used to writing about my own life and actually trained to keep myself out of the story, but I think that in order to wrestle with some of the uncomfortable questions of this book, starts out as a story about of saving our family's land, but I think once you go down that road, you realize like, well, even if we save it, what does this mean for the next generation and a problem that is likely to arise for them. it felt like important for me to of take an honest look at myself and my own parenting and what am I passing on, right? That second part of it all. I realized that I needed to do more and I needed to write about my journey, which wasn't always easy, I hope that that is helpful to other people. We're, today in this country, coupling up with people from different backgrounds and different stories and different cultures. so And how much do we want to pass on to that next generation? What is important to us? What's foundational to us? if we don't ask those hard questions of ourselves, they quickly get consumed by just the day-to-day of life. the busyness of parenting, of working, of all of our daily demands. And yet I think, ironically, it's one of the most fundamental, important things to us, is family. Right? And so that cultural part of it is, something I wanted to start a discussion about, that was hopefully more universal, not just about me.

BERT LOCKWOOD 13:14

Sara, I don't I don't know that you put it in these terms but, it seemed to me that part of story that you were concerned with was Uh, what we've been witnessing in this country where say the top 10% in terms of wealth, their influence has been... been significantly increasing. And- I guess at one point we would characterized it as the U. S. third world country, the very increasing the wealth and the poor. of influence. Would that be accurate?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 13:49

Yeah, I realized that my book, my family's experience could help people understand, the through line of history and how we got here. And that, it's not as though in Hawaii, in our case, that a tax problem just shows up. But it's part of a string of And it's part of a string of different ways that, Hawaiians have lost their land over generations and they're outside forces that are causing a lot of that is the economic forces, the inequality, uh, power and um, the wealth, the extreme wealth, that Hawaii tends to attract, as an investment. I think that those two things are opposed to each other. It is really truly about, who deserves to live here? know, what is Hawaii without Hawaiian people, right? If they afford to even buy a home or their children have no chance of doing versus the world's wealthiest who truly are buying up hundreds and hundreds of acres. that has an impact on everyone else that lives there. so wanted to widen everyone's awareness and lens because I think the loss of Hawaiian a quiet crisis. It's not the kind of thing that gets headlines. It's not the kind of thing that one family is going to call the local newspaper or TV station talk about because there's a lot of sadness and trauma about it feels very personal and very small, the pattern of it and the expanse of it is quite wide, actually. I wanted to help get people thinking about a place maybe they don't know the history of, that we, haven't shared from this perspective, perhaps. And it helps widen our understanding of what's taking place. by the way, what's happening in Hawaii is not the only place, right, that this is happening. You the extreme kind of wealth inequality and its impact on a number of communities. Um, housing is just one of those or real estate is just one of those. but that applies to a lot of places. It just so happens that on an island chain, you know, real estate. And so it is exacerbated by that and compounded by the fact that, there is so, so much wealth there. or at least there's so much investment from the wealthiest there. So, I'm not writing about policy per se, but I'm trying to show human, human results of what's happened, when this kind of thing goes on and on.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 16:18

And Sarah, I thought it was really interesting in the book that you provide really key insights for what cost of living is like in Hawaii, such as Hawaiian real estate is like New York city, but the salary is like the state of Arkansas. that is quite a disparaging range and the home in Hawaii is about a million plus the median salary is around 50,000. yet native Hawaiians can't even afford their own homeland. I was thinking about you this week in the news, watching what's happening in Madrid, S with the woman who's 87 years old, being forced out of her apartment that she's lived in for 70 years. Because a luxury property developer has bought the building and she can't afford the over 200% increase in rent.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 17:16

wow.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:16

She's 87. I have been so proud to see the multi-generational protest happening in Madrid and people of all ages bringing out tents and camping and demanding leaders that we vote in to do

something about the housing crisis. we're seeing it in Hawaii. We're seeing in the mainland of the United States and we're seeing it all over the world.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 17:39

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 17:40

if I uh, Meredith, make point in my, women's rights seminar I indicating a lawyer's strategy, with a case, often you're not gonna win necessarily, in court, but if you can get the newspapers to cover your story, that can make all the difference. And so I told them, an incident, that was involved woman who, was in the United and, being threatened to be deported back to her home country, where she indicated that she would be subject to female genital mutilation if she were sent back. Now, this is not something that the government does. It's something that the family does. So it's, it's not a typical human rights problem where you're bringing an action against the government. You've got to somehow make the government responsible. this was before an immigration judge Um, and the New York Times had a front page story, uh, about the situation. And I said to my then class, she just won the case. because there's no way with that publicity that that judge was going to not grant her asylum, even though it didn't come within the traditional notion of, political if you will. But it's part of the press that you have in terms of bringing to uh, stories that are going to political pressure to do right thing.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 19:14

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. I think we're at a point now where a lot of people, are very acutely aware, of the wealth disparity that's happened and the impact of that. Right. and, I just wanted to of start a conversation about like, what is real estate What does responsible investment look like? And what does it mean to invest in a place? like, if we can go back actually to Malama Ika Aina, are we thinking of land as what we can extract from it? Right. Or are we thinking of land of how, for people who live there, who are caring for it, who are stewarding it, who are, also making sure that it is giving us what we need. when you have, in, in Hawaii in particular, fragile ecosystems, know, that have, species, of birds, of animals and plants that exist nowhere else in the world, it's especially important to be aware of this impact, that we're having, um, or that's happening to a place that is so special. so there's a cultural component of it. There's just kind of a, um, stewardship component of a, it comes down what are our actual values here, of places that we say that we love and we appreciate, how do we make sure that people can, actually live here, afford to make this their home? what impact are we on, on people, when we allow just of rampant investment to, to happen? there is an all of those may not be in the news. but I think you're I think you're right. That, through one case or one family story, hopefully that opens up people's minds. And, for me, I know, 9 million people or something like that come to Hawaii every year. very few of them have, this understanding of this narrative because other dominant narratives are so strong. You know, Hawaii is a bucket list vacation spot. It is, one of the most beautiful places on earth. those are true. but we need a new narrative that's a more local perspective. And that was what I was trying to accomplish here with, Kuleana.

BERT LOCKWOOD 21:13

Yeah

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 21:14

I really appreciate, Sara, the insight you um, audiences who are going to read your book and are the tourists who will go to Hawaii, to know that if you stay in, a luxury resort, that it's really important to know the people that are at that resort who work there, landscapers, house cleaners that are, making your room beautiful every day. but a lot of them are getting priced out themselves. to quote you in the book, y say homeless in their homeland. that really has stuck with me. knowing that when you are looking at a view of all those beautiful hotels, thos big luxury resorts, but if you drive, let's say about 15 minutes, I think you said outside of that area, there are actually encampments because people aren't able to, you're looking at it. So again, for that housing median. know this is weighted question. I, heard you answer it in a another podcast I was hoping to provide additional insight into persons who are really excited to visit Hawaii as tourists or who are looking to move to Hawaii. How can they be good shepherds of the land? How can they respect natives? How could perhaps they acclimate?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 22:25

Yeah, I get this question a lot, and I a lot of people do want to be responsible know, especiall to places with a rich culture and history like Hawaii. so, I guess a couple of things, for um, when I visit a place, I like to understand its history, its people, and I think just educating yourself a little bit before you go around the culture and history is important to understand. and also know that aloha is real, like, people in Hawaii do love sharing their culture, but they also want to know that, you're gonna appreciate that, that you'll, know, seek it out, you'll also be respectful of the things that are special about Hawaii. So, respecting, nature, to, a I see a lot of tourists try to touch a sea The sea turtles are everywhere and they're amazing, but that's also against the law. And so, simple things about being educated and aware the fragility of the ecosystem, as well as, understanding the culture is important. not just going there to feel like, it's just another sandy beach, I'm just gonna be here to be served, you know. there are a lot of other sandy beaches, so, what makes this special, what makes this place unique, I think, is the culture. and then in terms of, like, moving there or investing, I, I think that, that's a separate question I I have a harder view on that. I think a lot of people fantasize after they visit, like, oh, I'm gonna live here and my life will be amazing and transformed. And, um, the truth is most people who move there don't stay, they end up leaving after three years. and local people know this, because it's a hard adjustment. It's hard culture, it's isolated in a lot of ways, it's very expensive, and you're gonna make a lot less money. and so, those factors all together make it hard, and they make it exciting maybe for our first couple years. That's something that is a hard reality that anyone thinking about moving should really think hard about is, like, what is their plan? and then kind of related to that is for anybody who wants to invest is, like, what are you investing in in terms of the community? Is it just about, your own, money-making opportunity? if so, I think that there's a lot of other places you can do that without having a real, um, detrimental impact on local people. Hawaii has a real housing shortage, but it's not because there's not enough homes. It's because a lot of those homes sit empty and they're second homes. And then has a lot of other people who work every day, know, stacked up in

multi-generational homes, grandma, tutu, and, um, their kids all under one roof. that puts a lot of real pressure and, I think, even resentment, from local people. People who feel like, t here working hard every day want to make sure the people who are foreigners who are visiting, know, understand the impact that they have on, their footprints, if you will. So, I think it's just kind of like being a Girl Scout or being a good hiker. You know, you, like, want to leave things as, not harmed when you leave. And you want to be aware of the impact of your footprints when you arrive.

BERT LOCKWOOD 25:28

, Sara, it was um, 30 years I think it was in February. It was snowing in Cincinnati. And I got and I got a, uh, call from, my nephew who had graduated from the law school, and he had to move to Hawaii. so got a job with a law firm in Hawaii. And so I get this call the line that I remember was, dear uncle Bert, you you can only go to the beach so many times a yeah. he received no sympathy whatsoever from his uncle.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:05

Sara, he probably stayed two or three years only in mainland.

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:10

He did.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:11

So you're absolutely spot on with that. Sara, I really loved getting to see your ancestral land through some of the really beautiful photos you included in the book. and getting to meet your family and your own ancestors. I um, recently home at my parents' house in Cincinnati. a we were going through old photo albums on the Lockwood side.

this is our Lockwood family farm in Vermont.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 26:41

Oh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:41

for our listeners who aren't looking at the video, I'm just showing Sarah a black and white photo my great grandfather. And then my grandfather as a little one with horses. I was hoping, you could take our listeners if they were able to enjoy the journey getting to your ancestral lands. And I know that you were were just having a recent conversation with Maggie Gates on Harvard Kennedy School's Justice Matters podcast, describing your family's land in Hana, Maui. almost as like an Indiana Jones journey. I was hoping you could take us on that journey and what it takes to get to your land physically.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 27:18

Sure. our family's land is in a very remote part of Maui. And so this is not the, sandy beach postcard photo you're thinking of, when you think of Hawaii. the first time I went, I was a child

about eight years old. And, to get there, you have to take one of the most infamous roads in all of the United States. a road that hugs the tall cliffs against the ocean. it is a small, at times, single lane road that crosses more than 50 single lane bridges.

BERT LOCKWOOD 27:53

Oh my God.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 27:54

So like curves around and around, the amazing thing though, is it's one of the most beautiful drives in the world, but it often makes people, including me, very car sick. Yeah. So, imagine, like, you get a cliffside view of the ocean as far as you can see on one side, and then you turn into the single-lane bridge, and you're blessed with the view of a waterfall naturally falling, know, several stories down, and then you're whipping around again to the cliffside, and so doing this for two and a half hours is what that experience is like. Not really anywhere to pull over

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:30

it,

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 28:30

in the middle of it's stressful.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:33

such a great writer that when I reading that chapter, I was there in the car with you when you were driving, and, like, getting that courage, and I was like, oh, my goodness. But, Sarah, did you ever drive it at night?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 28:44

I have driven it many times at night.

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:46

Ooh.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 28:47

in the rain. It's very... very

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:49

Not

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 28:49

scary.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:50

for the faint of heart.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 28:51

It's...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:52

We did Sicily. mom's side is from Palermo, my brother's an amazing driver, but even him on some of those mountain roads at night, we were just like, I think we're good. We'll just do it during the sun is up.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 29:06

Yeah, I remember doing it one when my kids were really little, and I think one of them was a little baby, like, she was crying half the time. And so just that added stress. And then you have local people trying to pass you and like riding your tail and then it was raining and it was like-and... I just wanted it to...

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 29:32

we should have got you a bumper sticker, like, I swear I'm not a tourist, I'm Native Hawaiian. be kind.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 29:38

Yeah, you just have to really swallow your ego ...and to be, very humbled because if you don't, you will be, In fact, there's a reason why people, sell t-shirts that say, I survived the Hana Highway. It's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 29:51

Great.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 29:51

a badge of honor if you do it. even, like, getting there I think my glimpse into, the real Hawaii versus the Hawaii sold to us on the brochure. not to say that those two things don't exist or are versions of it, but I think it my first time to my grandmother's land. And, it was a rainforest jungle type landscape. was wild brush growing everywhere. It was off of a dirt road. It still is today. you literally can't walk across it without being entangled in vines.and swarmed by mosquitoes. So it's not the romantic view of, of Hawaii. And the coastline is, like, these crazy, wild, huge waves that just crash into lava rocks, like these giant boulders that are truly gorgeous but also treacherous and look very dangerous, look like they could sweep you off your feet and carry you out to sea at a moment's notice. so, Hawaii, like, it's full nature. you feel small. You feel in awe of a place. You feel humbled by a place. I think that actually one of the wonderful things about Hawaii and any place that nature really shows us, how small we are and how much to appreciate what what really is capable of. that Hawaii version is something that I also wanted to share with readers they may or may not get experience.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:20

could you take us to 2019 when you and your siblings got that infamous email from your dad, Dennis, letting you know that you needed to protect this ancestral land And property taxes had increased by nearly 500%. I feel like I need to repeat that for listeners, 500%, which mind-boggling financial pressure for not just your immediate family, but your family, knowing that your dad is also one

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 31:54

Right,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:54

of eight.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 31:55

right. happened in 2019 it was Undramatic in some ways and super dramatic in others. I mean, my dad literally got a bill in the mail and it like had an extra zero at the end, it seemed like a typo. There was no explanation, but clearly it was not a typo and there was a due date. so that really set off the family crisis because this land was not owned per se by one person, not my father. My father is one of eight siblings, right? So eight children. All have joint responsibility for this property and, um, we had to figure out what to do. even if we could pay the bill in year one, it was really about, well, who knows what's happening next year, right? this could happen again. the uncertainty of our own fate of a property that, was deeply part of our family's heritage and Kuleana, Our responsibility. To steward. minister. To steward. And no one wanted to be the last. Family. Kind of the end of that. Tree. Right. That is going to sell the land. After, more than 175 years. so that set me on of a reporting journey as a journalist, as well as, know, personally understanding like, what does this land mean to me and my children? Um, and the reporting part of it was understanding the context of this land in more detail. we all have family stories, right? Um, family lore of what our grandparents told us or maybe our mother told And we don't of how much of it is true. in this case, this was my grandmother saying this land was given to us from the king, from the mountain to the sea. And, and it's still in our family today. and to go from there to me finding actual documents of the actual king's a ledger in Hawaiian in handwriting from 1848, of this land, given to my ancestor. Originally 990 acres, uh, today 10 acres. that to me was like shocking, uh, fascinating, mind blowing. And I thought, well, this is it. This is the story. how do we get from 990 acres to 10 acres? And I realized like my family's experience, that land loss, was really the story of the Hawaiian people. You it was ours and unique. And yet it was actually a narrative that is very, very common in Hawaii for local families.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:28

Really fascinating. Sara, one of my favorite parts of your book was getting to see your process as a journalist, also a historian, searching for answers about your family's relationship to the land. you discover, and it's a really special once a lifetime moment that there is radio recording of your great grandmother. in Honolulu in 1974. you get to hear her voice. it just so happens that when you're listening for the first time, the answers you had been searching for, she

answers. Could you take us back to that moment and what that was like having her come to life for you?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 35:07

Yeah, that was really special. great-grandmother's first language, was Hawaiian. I, of happened across this recording of her as a process of just learning more about the land. I was in Hana and I met someone asked me if I was aware of this recording because he had it. so I was immediately very interested. it turns out that, she was part of a radio program that was trying to interview all of the remaining Native Hawaiian speakers left alive still today. At that time, there were believed to be only about 2,000, on the whole planet. I never got a chance to meet my great-grandmother. She died, just a little bit after I was born. And I think that I was, that throughout the book seeking the guidance and knowledge of my elders. I had to, right, in order to get the family story accurate. And so I felt like this was actually, like, one way she was able to share her knowledge with me, because it helped me understand the context of her as, um, a Native Hawaiian speaker, a lolo Hawaii, as well as the content of what she was actually saying. Now, it took me a while. I don't Hawaiian. I didn't learn it until later in But, so I needed a translator to of tell me. But it just, like, arrived on a CD one day, you know, very modern. I put it on my Mac and then, bounces up and down and then starts playing, the voice of a woman I never really met. But it was so beautiful. And I realized I never heard anyone speak Hawaiian continuously like this. You know, she was telling a story. She was actually explaining, her wishes for the land to be shared with the public, to tell the story, to have people visit, to appreciate it, and, to protect, a temple that originally part of our family's land. to me, that was my direction. that was, the guidance that I had been searching for, to make sure, what, what is my role and how do I continue that chain of our kuleana? and hearing it from the source was so special and reminds us of the importance of recording the stories from our elders, because if you don't, you really lose it.

BERT LOCKWOOD 37:24

Was the temple still being used?

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 37:27

Yes. So, the it's called a heiau. That's a Hawaiian word for a temple. my great-grandmother, I was able to hear family stories as well as find newspaper articles about, this enormous temple my grandmother and her siblings wanted to protect, right? Because it was on our property, for a century, over a century. but I think when tourists started coming to Hawaii, they realized, as a family, how could they, put up a gate or a fence, you know, that wasn't going to keep people seeking it out or hiking to it or taking things from it. And so, it was a way for me to understand how family eventually donated temple to a nonprofit organization. now it's the National Tropical Botanical Garden. and now it's named after my family. It's called the Kahanu Garden.

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:18

Oh, wow.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 38:19

our family really pushed anthropologists to study it, to restore it to its original state. and I'm happy to say today it's been done you can go visit it. so, it is, her wishes came true.

BERT LOCKWOOD 38:33

Wow. And, and it a rich variety of trees and things.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 38:37

Yeah, it's a garden, I mean, it's called a garden, but it's really both a U. S. national landmark, the temple is today, but it is surrounded by, I think one of the best collections of breadfruit trees, which are native to Hawaii, and also a garden full of, um, original plants that Hawaiians use for, their community, their sustenance, it's a great way to also just, learn about people originally part of this community going back centuries. the temple has been carbon dated to the 16th century.

BERT LOCKWOOD 39:12

Wow. This particularly Pertinent. with what's going on in your current city.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 39:18

Yes. Yes.

Interesting. There is a parallel because the Heiau, in a way, is I really struggled at first to understand what it was about, but it is a monumental structure. It is about a show of power. Imagine the manpower it takes in centuries ago to build something of, any size. And you have to have power to command that. And you have to be trying to make a statement, right, about perhaps that leader's power. And Washington is, of course, a city of many monuments. It is built to impress those who come. It is built project power. in a lot of ways, those things don't change of human nature and our desire to showcase power structure. does it mean when you want to tear it down?

BERT LOCKWOOD 40:11

to

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 40:11

What does it mean change it? What does it mean when you want to erect your to make that statement? that's something that hasn't changed over the centuries, for sure.

BERT LOCKWOOD 40:21

Meredith had mentioned we've visited Sicily a number of times, think probably the most memorable thing is going to mountain towns where they have built these cathedrals. I just can't imagine they built the cathedral.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 40:39

Human capacity is just incredible.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 40:41

Well, in thinking of labor that it took your family, your dad, your brother, your cousins, uncles, to farm out your land to preserve it. took—you only had about a week, and even trying to get the equipment up there. know, luckily, you are native. So, you had other locals that were willing to help you because, what's so beautiful about the Hawaiian culture its community its connection and helping each other. And that, the land, as you said, the ocean, it's all part of you. It's all part of your heritage. one thing I loved, Sara, in your book, Kuleana, the legacy of old Hawaii. I growing up and being fascinated by history, particularly our U. S. history books, I didn't learn a lot about Hawaii other than when the U. S. took it over.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 41:31

Me too.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 41:32

Your book, for me, was exactly what I wanted to learn about the true old Hawaiian history and encouraging our listeners to dive into your book learn all about it. But I was hoping you could give a little bit of that insight into what Hawaiian society looked like back then also what began to change with the arrival of With the arrival of missionaries, settlers, growing foreign and economic political interests into, like you said, that really ecosystem that Hawaiians had built through agriculture. Even you talked about in the book, you know, sustainabi back then.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 42:12

Yeah, I really think the Hawaiian people are, we're masters of ultimate sustainability. And if you think about it, makes sense surviving in that island environment, they relied on nature. They relied on what they could care for and get from the earth. And so they actually built islands into what are called ahupua'a. this was the of singular way of organizing society and also how they were able to survive and thrive for so many generations. an ahupua'a is, is if you think of an island like a circle, from the top... cut it into like pie pieces and the top is kind of like the mountain and bottom part of the triangle is along the shoreline they carve up the island that way so that know along the natural boundary so like say the ridges a mountain or the edges of the mountain so every family and part of community had a responsibility or a kuleana for very specific role in that triangle right either you were fishing from the shore or you were building hale or you were cultivating a taro patch and then you would share in those resources in what you were gathering with each other that sense of kuleana and that malama aina is really rooted in something that is fundamental to how hawaiians lived for centuries it was all about making sure everyone had enough it was about that balance what nature had to give and what they could cultivate from it we think about sustainability as this like cool trendy new topic but it actually is about going back to our roots I wanted to contrast that with today Hawaii imports 90% of its food. it's just gone so far off the rails from what it used to be because it's trying to support millions and millions of people right who are visiting who are you know not living there and so it has stretched the kind of capability of how do you you know care for and not just be extracting from it but growing food from it and so i think hawaii is trying to get back to some of that balance and get back to that ahupua'a inspired way of living wherever that's possible there's a lot we can learn from that original way of life

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 44:42

thank you so much Sara if i could get one final closing remark i'm gonna bring you to your journalism spotlight and you've you know been a journalist for 20 years from off at the wall street journal washington post you've also been at the npr and axios in today's emerging vacuum of how we are accessing news my dad is still the old timer with the print new york times every day he has so many magazine subscriptions from the atlantic which last year i loved your article in sarah that was fantastic and then i know you've talked about your teenagers using youtube as a source of news and we also get so many quick sound bites for headlines on social media we're not actively reading articles as a journalist is there any advice you could give to our listeners on really good practices of consuming news and making sure that it is supporting true journalists who are fact-checking and doing the work to preserve truth

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 45:42

good question i mean today it's so much harder for consumers isn't it we're overwhelmed with choice in a way there's some good parts of that because we it's kind of media is democratized a lot and so anyone can kind of be a publisher but we're also overwhelmed with a volume that i think is really hard to sort through in a lot of platforms right everything like you just mentioned from print to broadcast to social media so i think it's really important number one to do your homework and decide what is the kind of information that's important to you at a national level at an international level and maybe a local level right and then your own tailored interests in and i do think it's important to support news organizations that are doing great trusted journalism so however you decide on After doing your homework, it's important to know always like who's behind the company funding the journalists or funding direct journalists there's a lot of independent journalists now who have decided to go on their own and i it's important to pay for it because this work is not easy it takes time to do yet when done well it can make a real impact and know affects people's lives this is kind of people who are good at journalism are doing it for the right reasons to inform the public and Help empower people to make decisions. I think it's so essential to our democracy. you kind of get what you pay for. So if you're getting, you know, right. And if you're just like a free rider, then you have to do a lot more work to decide what's true and what's real. if you're just reading stuff on the internet or on social media, but I think you have to think about how am I committed to the news organizations or the journalists that are doing the work that's worthwhile and prioritize that. And when you pay for it, you're also more invested in prioritizing that as part of your daily diet of information. Right. so it's just about taking stock that kind of relationship you It's like any other kind of product you might tend to favor, but I think it's obviously very different in terms of the importance of for, for your own health, for your own information and decisions you're going to make as well as your family and our country. it's sounds broad and lofty, but it's really true.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 47:57

It's really powerful and needed more than ever.

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:00

Sara this has very special for us thank you ever so much for joining us for this important conversation thank you

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 48:09

thank you it's been my pleasure

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 48:11

thank you so much, Sara. I hope you will come back sometime and we can dive into so many other run. I just have to say that your grandparents, Richard and Martha are such a striking couple and it was so great getting to know them. so glad you included all these wonderful photos. It really felt like we got to know you and your whole family.

SARA KEHAULANI GOO 48:30

Oh, so glad you enjoy it. thank you for, for interest in my story wish you guys the best.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 48:37

One of my favorite quotes from Sarah in her book is, take care of the land, and the land takes care of you. Sarah's unique story teaches us that caring for the land is also about honoring its history, its people, and our responsibility to one another.

BERT LOCKWOOD 48:54

And what one generation cares for becomes what the next generation inherits.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 49:00

We are so grateful to Sarah for joining us, for sharing her family's story with such openness, and for giving us a deeper understanding of Hawaii. The history, and the obligation to care for the places we all call home. You can learn more about Sarah and her work on her website, linked in our show notes. And we hope you'll read her beautiful memoir, Kuleana, which is also linked in our show notes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 49:24

To everyone listening, we are grateful that you continue to join us for these conversations.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 49:29

And we always welcome your ideas. If there is a guest you would like us to invite, or a human rights issue you would like to explore, you can reach out to us directly at [humanrightsconversations@gmail.com](mailto:humanrightsconversations@gmail.com). Until next time.