

Human Rights Conversations Across Generations
Professor Terry Coonan episode
Transcript of edited conversation
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MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04

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

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:16

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:26

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

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:29

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:35

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

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:43

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

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:50

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

hi, listeners, this week's episode is a special trip down memory lane as my dad and I welcome our dear friend, Professor Terry Coonan, Long before Terry became the founder and executive director of the Florida State University Center for the of Human Rights, he was one of my dad's students at the University of Cincinnati College of and an Urban Morgan Fellow. During his time at Cincinnati, Terry served as managing editor of the Human Rights, completed internships with United Nations and UNHCR and became the first Urban Morgan Fellow selected for the U. S. Department of Justice Honors Program. In many ways, Terry took what he learned at Cincinnati and built something extraordinary at FSU, creating a human rights center that has educated and inspired generations of students. One thing I've always loved most about Terry is that he approaches his work with and humility and has one of the most contagious laughs you'll ever hear. For over two decades, he has trafficking trafficking victims, and torture survivors. His career spans human rights work in Chile during the Pinochet

dictatorship and years of advocacy on behalf of refugees. Today, he continues to represent individuals and families from countries including Afghanistan, Syria, and the DRC as they navigate ICE detention, deportation proceedings, and mounting challenges within the U. S. immigration system. We are honored to call Terry a friend and delighted to share his story with you.

BERT LOCKWOOD 2:45

welcome, Ter. I probably we'll begin. suggested the question, Terry, when we met. So have reflect on that and experiences at Morgan Institute.

TERRY COONAN 2:57

: Well, great, Burt. Thank you so much. It is a privilege and a pleasure to get to talk to both you and that, Morgan again. Also to reminisce on the, really, the exciting career that you and the Urban Morgan Institute have made possible for me. as I go back, Burt, I think of a number of times that you and I interacted while I was teaching at Notre Dame. I remember one of the trips that you made to Notre Dame Law School to talk about the whole model of using international human rights law in a more robust way within the US legal system. And I remember being very, very enthralled with that idea. Uh, I made a number of trips down to CU there at the University of Cincinnati even prior to starting. Um, I also recall that as part of one of those trips, I was in the hotel locally where, uh, I, you had actually graciously put me up and who came in, but Pete Rose and suddenly I was able to have dinner with Pete Rose. Now as a lifelong Los Angeles Dodger fan, that was perhaps a dubious privilege, but it was actually one of the great nights of my life. I quickly learned that Pete had no real knowledge about what was going on in El

BERT LOCKWOOD 4:15

the

TERRY COONAN 4:15

Salvador, situation of human life was around the world, but I heard some great stories from Pete Rose, including the one in which he told me that his favorite moment as. Pete Rose was, somebody who played the Dodgers, 12 times a year was that at one point they were taking a plane out to Los Angeles to play the Dodgers and they ran into severe turbulence and the plane began rocking. It began going up and down. And Pete Rose says, guys were crying. Guys were throwing up. He says, I took it upon myself to take my seatbelt off, stand up in the aisle and say, we're going down. We're going down. We're going to crash. We're all going to die. Who besides me has a three 75 lifetime? I remember thinking, Oh, I love this. Even as a Dodger fan. So Pete Rose and have dinner and several beers with Pete Rose. Thank you. All right. A lifelong Dodger fan. That was. Light for me.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:24

Wow. Hey, dad. Do you remember when we used to go to Boynton Beach, Florida? Terry, that's where my mom's parents lived for many years. And Terry himself is in Florida. We'll talk all about the state of Florida soon But dad, we used to go to Pete Rose ballpark cafe growing up

as kids. And we'd visit grandma and grandpa. It's no longer in service. It's no longer in service. And I just looked it up on Yelp.com. It only had a two

BERT LOCKWOOD 5:50
rating.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:50
star But we have, we had really good time there.

TERRY COONAN 5:55
Meredith, did you bet on any game? I have to ask as a Dodger fan.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 6:01
Well, you know, we probably did, but didn't he get a little bit in trouble for bribing and gambling? So it

TERRY COONAN 6:08
was alleged gambling that. And in his defense, he claimed that he was gambling on the team that he was coaching. Not against them. But it still did not pass muster. So Pete's not in the Hall of Fame

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 6:22
Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:22
yet.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 6:23
Well, leave it to the two lawyers, too, on the call to say allegedly.

TERRY COONAN 6:27
But listen, that was one of the great moments that I had being introduced to BERT and to the Urban Morgan Institute there in Cincinnati. Father Hesburgh, of course, was also quite aware of what the Urban Morgan Institute was doing with his interest in international human rights and international peace. So he was one of the ones that had talked to me initially about if I was interested in law and particularly in human rights law, that's one of the places I should absolutely consider. Professor George Lopez at the Peace Institute at Notre Dame strongly concurred with Father Hesburgh. And I ended up, yes, applying. And one of the great privileges of my life was to serve as an Urban Morgan Fellow for the three years that I was in. got to work on the Human Rights Quarterly, I was ultimately a managing editor under BERT for that. That itself was a tremendous experience to basically see how legal scholars but scholars from a number of different disciplines were dealing with human rights. was that interdisciplinary background on human rights that BERT has made possible through the Human Rights Quarterly that very much continues to shape the kind of interdisciplinary human rights work

that I now do here at Florida State Funny, we're about to celebrate our 20th anniversary, and it has been a great ride, very much inspired by BERT, by really the sort of interdisciplinary mission of human rights that has been embraced by the urban morgan, obviously with great focus on the legal framework for human rights, but that that and the human rights movement has expanded broadly, and that's been one of the great privileges to be in that human rights movement for much of the last almost 30 years now. I've got to tell some of the highlights that I of course remember there at Number one were the summer internships that BERT you made possible for me. I was just in Vienna really just several weeks ago working with the United Nations with their office on crime, which is centered not in Geneva, but there in Vienna, and I spent about a week going to meetings, working with in particular on anti trafficking topics, what are promising practices here in the United States in terms of both combating trafficking, but also caring for human trafficking victims. But BERT, I very much thought of you, thought of that summer of 1993 when we were there together. I was at the Vienna center for the first time in about 30 years to see where we had had that in particular that World Conference on Human Rights that was such a formative experience for me to be a part of.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:20

That's in that's in 1993 right?

TERRY COONAN 9:23

1993 absolutely.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:26

we send you there in the summer for that?

TERRY COONAN 9:29

you did, Bert. Yeah, I spent first part of my summer in Vienna. I've been... You sent me to Strasbourg to the Human Rights Institute there. And then I

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:37

wow.

TERRY COONAN 9:38

finished the summer working with the UN Subcommittee on Human Rights in Geneva. It was an amazing summer for me to have. And even now continues to greatly impact so much of what I do as a human rights advocate, but also as a human rights educator. It was just a tremendous summer.

BERT LOCKWOOD 9:57

you know, I've always sort of jealous some of these... Well, most of the placements that we do for the students, I wish that I could go on them.

It doesn't work that way. We've had some very popular ones recently sending people to work with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission.

That's become very popular, you

TERRY COONAN 10:22

I

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:22

know.

TERRY COONAN 10:23

can imagine.

BERT LOCKWOOD 10:25

Someone has to do that work.

TERRY COONAN 10:26

It's dirty, thankless work, but someone must do it. Absolutely. But, Bert, remembering that summer, and especially it was a such a tremendous introduction for me to the United Nations world of human rights, to the mechanisms, to many of the stakeholders, uh, still in touch with a great many of the people that I worked with that summer. The second summer that you made possible for me was working with the UN High Commission for Refugees in Washington, D. other tremendously formative summer. It was the summer, actually, of the Rwandan genocide, there was, of course, a Haitian refugee crisis at the time. So, again, the things that made possible was, you know, actually attending hearings in Congress on almost a weekly basis, ended up assisting working on a pro se asylum packet because there were so many asylum seekers, especially from Haiti, who had no ability to be represented. It was a great introduction for me to that cross-section of immigration and human rights. And that's the other great experience that continues to very much inform what I do almost on a daily basis here. Uh, my career, has really been at that intersection of immigration and human rights. Uh, the great opportunity that you gave me to work with the U. S. Justice Department after I graduated from law school was also a tremendous experience. Uh, again, it was essentially working with three immigration judges in San Antonio, Texas, sitting in on their hearings, talking to them about cases, and then drafting their opinions for them. Uh, it was a great introduction both to U. S. immigration law, how international human rights and refugee law actually intersects with, within domestic immigration law. And it was a great introduction to the understanding how is it that judges think. So, uh, tremendous. That then launched me into the world of advocacy. I stayed on for about another five years in San Antonio, Texas, actually practicing in front of the very judges whose decisions I had spent about a year and a half writing. But it was a tremendous immersion into the world of immigration law.

BERT LOCKWOOD 12:48

Well, some of the things that occur are sort of, uh, fate, I had gone to a meeting of human rights programs, um, at, Yale Law School. and, after the meeting, I went to the airport and, I got fogged in at the airport with, the president of Florida State University, uh, Sandy

D'Alemberte, who, had come up to the meeting at Yale because he had, and an alumnus who wanted to donate, um, money to establish an international human rights program, but he was particularly interested in ha an activist, kind of thing. I uh, fogged in with, uh, Sandy and he basically pumps me for three hours on, you know,

TERRY COONAN 13:43

uh,

BERT LOCKWOOD 13:43

ideas for what he could do,the And, you know, uh, you know, we just had this great, uh, conversation and he subsequently contacted me said could I recommend someone to, um, be the director. And, uh, uh, I recommended, uh, Terry because from that conversation uh, I had President D'Alemberte, it seemed to me that Terry was the perfect person to, uh, head up that program. and, and, and that the, he really wanted, uh, someone that was deeply committed to, uh, social justice issues. And I thought Terry would be the perfect person. And, so your fate in some ways, came about, in the new Haven airport, uh,

TERRY COONAN 14:26

wrote it.

BERT LOCKWOOD 14:27

uh, if you will. but I That, you went down, uh, and interviewed and he told me subsequently they had a number of people from Harvard and Yale that had come down but you clearly were the, the, the top And, and I from subsequent conversations, uh, with him, how pleased he was with the work that you have been doing Uhm, uh, unfortunately, we, we lost him. he passed away a couple years ago, he, he was very, proud of the work that you have done at, at Florida State. And, one of the particularly interesting things to me, Terry, about your work you know, he had located it under the office of the, the president intentionally, uh, because he wanted to keep a particular interest in the, program, uh, program. unlike the Morgan Institute, which is based at the law school you know, all our fellows are law students thing. you've had the opportunity to have a university-wide, impact. And I wonder if you could talk about, some of the richness of the, the programs and the courses and stuff that you're doing. I know, for instance, that you, and you may still be doing this, now, but on some occasions, taught a course with the, I believe the chairman of the film department, at Florida State.

TERRY COONAN 15:49

Absolute, Bert. Bert, first of all, I have to thank you. And I, I have to say that that three-hour fog bank was the most fortuitous fog bank in my, I'm extremely grateful for the fact that that fog did not lift. And that, uh, you had Sandy D'Alemberte, or he had you as a captive audience. Uh, Sandy was the ultimate blue sky thinker. As you mentioned, a former president of the ABA, former dean of our law school here at FSU. And at that point in time, he was the president of FSU. And it had been his brainstorm really that, again, huma rights is meant, meant it's, it's too important to be left to those of us who are lawyers. And Sandy as a lawyer was the first to say that. He had the idea that Florida State University should have an interdisciplinary human

rights center. What was interesting was that, I think much like in the way that he picked your brain for three hours there in that airport that day, he was doing that when he interviewed, I think an entire host of us who were candidates. Um, what we were being asked to do was to tell Sandy what might an interdisciplinary human rights center look like here at Florida State University. And the more I looked at FSU, the more exciting that possibility seemed that they have, of course, a law school, but they also have a first rate film school. One of the best film schools in the country, one of the best social work schools, an outstanding criminology school. They also have a lot of applied departments, um, art therapy, music therapy. when I looked at the possibilities that FSU would have, it was actually quite exciting to get to brainstorm. And I remember brainstorming with you over that, even as I went through that interview process about how might a 21st century university do human rights. And I was fortunate also that Sandy also had the idea that it should be advocacy based, that Sandy was a big one for advocacy. I remember him telling me that as dean of the law school, he had wanted more clinical programs, but that a number of his faculty had fought them on that. And they had told him that, no, Sandy here at the altar of the law school, we teach the theory of the law. Uh, students could figure out how to practice the law after they get out in the field. And Sandy used to say, you know, if medical schools. We won't teach our students how to operate. They can figure that out on patients once they actually get out there. Sandy said, medical schools would be sued into the next world. How is it that law schools could still get that? And, I had great appreciation for the fact that, you know, as I went through law school, I had not only a tremendous academic kind of background that you made possible in human rights with the coursework, with the working at the Human Rights Quarterly, but that the internships, which were actually so crucial to that as well. And it was really kind of an urban Morgan model that I proposed to Sandy D'Alemberte. I told him, well, Sandy, first of all, we should be creating classes throughout the university and I'd like to teach a number of those. I've gone on to do that. So, for years, I have taught a human rights film class in our film school, where we spend the first half of the semester looking at human rights documentary films and the second half looking at Hollywood films. And two very, very different approaches, not just to human rights, but to actually doing film as well. But that has been a tremendous kind of area to get to teach in. It's also led me to actually be asked to work, actually help co-produce a number of films that our film school has made so that we have done films uh, the stories of torture survivors, what they can contribute to the human rights field. We've looked at refugee stories, we looked, created another film looking just at Joyce Horman, uh, again, Charles Horman killed in the coup in Chile in 1973. And his widow, Joyce, had gone on to become a tremendous human rights advocate in herself, especially advocating for the whole idea of restorative justice so that, that the films that we've been able to do over the years have been just a great part of the human rights mission. two of our most recent ones was number one with our dance school, about a year back, the dance school came to me along with the film school and said, we'd actually like to have our dancers create a film. And could they take the stories of human rights survivors that you have worked with at the human rights center? And that by the way, was the other great part of the mission that Sandy D'Alembert gave us. I told them, Sandy, we need to be advocacy based. So we should be doing the very human rights cases that are there in U S immigration law, but that reflect international human rights law. So for really close to 25 years now, we've represented asylum seekers from, I think, close to a hundred different countries,

torture survivors from a host of different countries, our most recent torture survivor, the U S Catholic priest from Nicaragua detained and tortured for about six months under the Ortega regime there. And the most recent area, or I just suppose, uh, genre of human rights work has been working with human trafficking victims as well. So it was the film school that came to us and asked, can you take the stories in particular of women? I had told them that the vast majority of the survivors, the victims that we work with at our human rights center are now women and girls, that this is the impact of gender-based violence, whether it's wartime rape, whether it's torture, uh, a time sex trafficking, but that women quite disproportionately. Make up the largest part of our human rights caseload. And what the dance school asked me to do was to help them create a dance script about the women that we have worked with, and not just talking about the horrific things they endured, but really how they survived and how they went on to become advocates. And the film that they created was, first of all, it was done with 360 technology, this kind of technology that requires you to wear a headset. And we wanted to work with other people. And we wanted to do that. So, I thought that that was only for skateboarder films. Oh my God! It was a human rights topic proposed by our dance school, but they did a very, very artistic, uh, film. It was called Threshold. It was, I think it's a human rights thing, and it looked at, it was through dancing, entirely dancing, um, the experiences of women, first of all, the suffering they endured, but the resilience that they actually then displayed, and how they went on to become survivors, and many of them advocates. And that has played in Congress. It's played all over the world in dance and film festivals. So, again, it's the great example of the kind of collaboration that I get to do here.

BERT LOCKWOOD 23:14

That's fantastic.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:17

Terry, I just, I just went to the FSU Center for Advancement of Human Rights website for our listeners. Um, again, the film is called Threshold, a 360 immersive experience. and in our show notes, we could include the link for anyone who'd like to watch

TERRY COONAN 23:33

Thank you for doing that, Meredith. And it's just a great reminder about how the arts are such an important vehicle for human rights work as

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:42

And I wanted to mention too, Terry, you and got to catch up, uh, last month and I was so honored to hear that you, in the film school shared one of my, uh, comrades in the space of social impact, sustainability, and fashion advocacy for garment workers around the world. You showed the film True Cost. True Cost came out in 2015. It's a movie by Andrew Morgan, Safia Minney, who is the CEO and founder of PeopleTree, I will say quite a few of my listeners in my impact community. we are big fans of Safia Minney's work. She's been doing incredible work in fashion advocacy, sustainability, and really trying to help improve the industry to be more ethical. and to really spotlight, um, and to really spotlight what happens with trafficking and unethical labor practices behind the scenes and with the emergence of fast fashion in the early

2000s, that industry, which I worked in for about a decade, in New York City. I myself saw the industry take a turn for the worst. As you might remember, Terry, that's when I moved to Calcutta, India to start Releve. but I was so excited that you brought that movie True Cost to your students. because it's a really critical film that, you know, is almost 10 years old. And I'm just glad to know that your generation of students have been able to see it and learn from it.

TERRY COONAN 25:08

And Meredith, uh, again, great work that you've done a great reminder about how much human rights work there is to do outside the legal field, but that in that whole world of apparel. And that this is a film that I show every year in my film course. I also featured it as part of a, a human trafficking, a university-wide human trafficking initiative that we actually had this past spring, uh, worked with the president's office on that. It was one of three films that we brought in to basically talk about where are human rights that our students should be aware of. And so many of our students, as you know, Morgan, by fast fashion. And that's one of the great awareness things that, that we work with after those students watch that film in my human rights film class, I asked them, go back to your closets and tell me what brands of clothing are in your closet. And I actually have them investigate what's the posture of each one of uh, industrial giants, whether it's H and M or any number of different, uh, companies that are absolutely founded on this notion of fast fashion and the great work that your friend has done. And that continues to be done around the world. And a great reminder, how selective consumerism is a really, really important human rights advocacy tool as

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:33

And, you know, something I always, um, share with newcomers into the space of fast fashion, um, you know, you hear a lot of these buzzwords these days, sustainability, circular economy. Many don't know what it really means. but I think one of the major turning points that happened in the fashion industry, particularly in the garment sector was in 2013. It happened on April 24th. It was the Rana Plaza fire in Bangladesh.

TERRY COONAN 26:59

Oh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:59

It led to widespread international protests, and calls for better safety standards. I myself was working in the fashion industry as was my sister. and there, there was a very brave Bangladeshi journalist who went to the rubble, at the building site and found tags from H and M old Navy Levi's Lauren. and you know, what really happens is a lot of those major retailers, don't take responsibility and they go to other countries countries like Laos and Cambodia and Vietnam. So with the Rana Plaza fire, and the collapse of the building, it really changed the tides. Um, unfortunately, fast fashion is still growing, but we have a lot more of advocacy groups happening, and also to combat the labor and human trafficking side of it as well. Yeah.

TERRY COONAN 27:43

And Meredith, as you mentioned, it's such an ongoing, really compelling human rights issue. And where consumers, especially our young college students, have a huge role to play in that with the choices that they make as consumers. That's been in the ongoing lesson that I continue to learn here in directing an interdisciplinary human rights center. Uh, one of my great partners has been the Social Work School. I teach courses for them, as well. But the role that social workers play, both individually, uh, in kind of the restorative work that they will often do in kind of counseling contexts, uh, worked a lot with them on training on how do you work with a torture survivor, or what are the needs that a human trafficking victim will have. Or, uh, an asylee, someone coming from a war zone. A great deal of our work here at our human rights center is actually training work. It's training for professionals, uh, within our university world, students that will go out to work in a lot of different areas. Uh, that also includes criminology. I'm actually tenured in criminology. And much of my work there has been training future law enforcement officers or future prosecutors or defense attorneys or judges, as it turns out. So that, yeah, there's been a great ripple effect with having an interdisciplinary center. I find. Uh, the interdisciplinary human rights center. The interdisciplinary human rights center. And, uh, again, that's been a great privilege for us to work in here. The latest development, uh, we were able to introduce an interdisciplinary human rights major this past year. We had spent, in one sense, 20 years laying the groundwork for it. Um, but what's quite unique about a professional. And, uh, we were able to do that work in our religious studies department that they looked at the kind of core of human rights courses. And there have been about 70 of them that we've developed over the years here at FSU. And those are in criminology and international affairs, political science, uh, security studies. We've had folks that obviously work in law and medicine, a host of different sort of homes around the university that were all very interested in their professors offering human rights courses. And, uh, number one, I think that's a testimony to the human rights field right now that, Bert, as you and I know, you know, it started really as a legal enterprise. And going back to Eleanor Roosevelt and the, the legal legacy that she had, the whole development, the, the norms that again, the United Nations and really the international community spent over 60 years creating, we're still obviously doing that, but that so much of that has moved now into other disciplines. And, uh, so many of my students who will go on to do human rights work, don't do it with a legal background, but do it with a, just a broad based grounding that we try to give them here at FSU. So we have about several hundred of these undergraduate students now, and I teach a core course. It's cross listed between criminology and religion, but what it is, is an introduction to the human rights movement. But, uh, so, uh, so, uh, what are the issues, the stakeholders, there's a little bit of law 101 in terms of what's the legal framework of different treaties that have actually been put out for, countries to basically ratify and implement. But it's to also look at what are some of these newer issues, environmental rights, group rights, uh, gender based rights that were not part of the discussion in 1948. So it is such a dynamic field and the great privilege here has been to get to work with really, really dynamic and quite dedicated professors and students as well. Some of the best students have been what we call our first gen students. These are students that are in their, they're the first in their families to go to the, go to college. Many of them come from immigrant families. Florida is an immigrant state, and it's been such a privilege to get to teach them and actually get to help mentor them to go on and do a great deal of work. Many of them are dreamers. Again, They were brought here as small children,

and suddenly when they were 16 years old, discovered when their parents told them, "Well, you can't really get a driver's license because you're not documented." And for many of them, that was the first realization that they had that they actually weren't American, that they had grown up speaking English. Many of them were the best students at their schools. They were great athletes. They were doing community service. And suddenly they discovered, "Oh, I'm actually not documented." So, a lot of our work here at the Human Rights Center has been with what we call our dreamers. Uh, President Obama in 2012 created, uh, it's called the Deferred Action Program that allows these children who were brought here not of their own, by their own choice, but brought as small children, they're allowed to get work authorization. They're allowed what we call soft legal status. It's not permanent, it's still being fought in the courts as well, but it gives them a chance at a future, and that's, again, been another great part of the advocacy that we've been able to do. We've worked with several hundred of those students, uh, also worked quite closely with several of our presidents here at FSU to basically create policies that were more immigrant-friendly and especially, friendly to those dreamer students. That, again, much of the political invective that has been directed against our immigrant population in recent years is that they've been has been very, very much felt here on college campuses. And it's been a privilege to be at Florida State University where our leadership has strongly backed those students. And a lot of the work that I have done with the president and with our legal counsel office has been to create the policies that are very, very important for offering those opportunities to, as it turns out, some of the best students that Florida has produced. And many of them have gone on to serve in the military. Many of them doing

BERT LOCKWOOD 33:58
Florida.

TERRY COONAN 33:58
graduate work. Many of them were actually essential workers during the pandemic, doing a whole host of different things. So, yeah, again, it's that advocacy part of our mission that has really been a tremendous part of our larger mission here at FSU.

BERT LOCKWOOD 34:16
it is so important, given situation in the country often story is cast in a different light. And it's so important, work you're doing, Terry, address those issues, but basically the immigrants as well. And, you know, it's one of the key roles of education. I was intrigued by your mentioning of the social work. I think it was about 40 years ago, I came across an article that suggested that the first discipline to adopt a human rights framework was actually the social work.

TERRY COONAN 35:01
And they're proud of that. Very much so. And they have been such a tremendous partner here at FSU. A lot of the work that we're doing, Bert, again, this victim-based advocacy, but has been sex and labor trafficking victims. It's been human trafficking victims that have become really kind of our largest caseload. a lot of what we do, and again, this all goes back to sort of the whole background that you gave me at Cincinnati there, but it's empowering people. It's

bringing victim voices to the forefront. And much of what we do is bring the stories of the victims that we work with and bring them into the policy world, bring them into the legal world. I've done a great deal of work with our Florida legislature and our governor's office on creating entirely new laws on human trafficking. That's a very new area for state engagement. Federal law has led the way since about 2000. And states have only slowly kind of caught up with that so that a lot of my work has been drafting laws for the legislature. A lot of trainings that I've done for judges, state judges in about 35 different states as well, through what's called the National Judicial College.

BERT LOCKWOOD 36:17

yeah, I want to underscore that work, Terry, I know you've been doing great deal of, uh, educating, judges around the country, uh, to these issues and that's so critical, uh, the role that you've played there because often, international law, immigration law, these are sort of foreign topics that may well not have had during, uh, their legal education and, you know, the work that you have with, the law enforcement, efforts around, around the country, uh, as well is, real key and I'm, sure it's part your ability as demonstrated in your, uh, Pete Rose, uh, exchange being able interact and have these conversations so many different people. I always Terry, mentioned and told sort of the story that you're one of these people can go into a room where there are all sorts of people, and by the end of cocktail period you probably talk to everybody that's in the room. And makes a tremendous difference in being able have those interactions important people who might not necessarily be knowledgeable or empathetic, if you to start with. But to be able to sort of humanize these issues is really critical work.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 37:50

you do a wonderful job. I think you both are maybe subconsciously recruiting

TERRY COONAN 37:57

student

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 37:57

students or future students for your programs.

you know, full circle moment for me is because you invited my dad to FSU to do a human rights seminar with your students. you asked your students if there would be anyone kind enough to give Professor Lockwood a ride to the airport back to Cincinnati. and your dear student, who's now graduated, Jonathan

TERRY COONAN 38:22

Yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 38:23

Grosso. He drove Bert back to the airport. And of course, my dad tried to steal him from you. And him to the Urban Morgan Institute of Human Rights. lo and behold, Jonathan was actually looking for a summer internship. I was looking for an intern for social impact work. And

Jonathan, I can say we've now worked together for over eight years. I will humbly brag that through both of you've guided us to want to be fully committed to the world of human in many different facets from creativity, social entrepreneurship, design. And I always appreciate that. Terry, you such an advocate that you don't necessarily have to be a lawyer to be in the human rights field. can use all your different tools and multi-talented skill sets for human rights. So I'm very glad that I was able to share that memory. And thank you, Terry, bringing Jonathan into the Lockwood family.

TERRY COONAN 39:19

I'm happy to do that and happy to send a number more Jonathans to you as well, Meredith.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 39:24

Well, I'm looking for some interns, so please let me know.

TERRY COONAN 39:27

Okay, well, we have been very happy to send a number of our graduates to Burt for the Urban Morgan Institute, that a number of really good undergraduate students here have made their way to the University of Cincinnati and have gone on to do some great things, working from the Soros Foundation, others are judges. I mean, yeah, it's just been exciting to see the difference makers that our students can be, very much so.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 39:54

was wondering if you both could talk more : You know, I think it was such an honor for me. um, looking at my dad's legacy through the Urban Morgan Institute of Human Rights, as well as Human Rights Quarterly, the academic journal, and hearing from you, Terry, that you modeled your Human Rights Institute at Florida State University after the Urban Morgan. I was wondering if you both could dive deeper into that, and tell our listeners, um, how, um, how, Terry, you looked at it as a model to duplicate and also grow from.

TERRY COONAN 40:23

Meredith, that's the great opportunity for me to kind of take that model. you know, Florida State University, it's here in Tallahassee, Florida, so it's not the Beltway, it's not New York City. An in the same way that University of Cincinnati, you know, is in middle America, but the opportunities that Burt made possible for us, especially through these internships, uh, which a really, really key element to getting students out, getting them into the actual context of human rights work, both here in the United States and around the world. And that was the model that I thought would apply to Tallahassee, to a university that, again, isn't in a large urban East Coast city. So, that was the model that I had proposed to Sandy D'Alemberte. So, we send out about 20 students every year. Uh, they're law students, they're social work students, they're art therapy, music therapy. Uh, we have had students work in torture treatment centers around the world, in UN refugee camps. many of them have actually worked immigration law, working, uh, in the United States, but beyond as well, uh, working with immigrants, many of whom are demonized. Uh, and again, we see that in Europe, we see it in the United States. So, it's tremendous human rights work to be done there. the anti-trafficking

field has been another great place for, again, our art therapy and music therapy students. I've sent to Bangkok, where they work in a shelter of, with children that have been rescued from sex trafficking, children that many times were sold into brothels by their own families. And that they were sold in exchange for a lot of big screen TV. They don't have a family that they can safely go back to. So, for about 20 years now, our art therapy and music therapy students have actually gone there every summer to work with those children in essentially a home where they will stay till they're about 22 years old, till they can actually embrace another future. So, it's just been another classic example of how these different professions that our students are preparing for, how they can actually find a human rights application to those. And that's been such an important lesson from the urban Morgan and from Bert's model to basically apply in a university wide human.

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:48

and, and Terry, I'm sure from what you're describing, you've had the same experience, uh, that I've had where. You've had these students that have gone on, these, uh, foreign externships uh, social um, organizations. we, we have them, when they come back, um, after their, summer experience, talk about, to other students to talk about what their, experience was And it's not uncommon for, these students to say that it was a, uh, life-changin experience, that, that they had. that is so, important the human rights program because, we send these people after their year of law school, and so they're still at the law school for two more years. frankly, uhm, we all sort of benefit from these, that these students have had because, students learn as much from fellow students, as, as they will, from their faculty during the, course of their studies, but, to have this opportunity for those experiences, particularly for most students at period when they're, you 20s, really can have an on their lives. I mean, they're at a period in their life where they're, very, open to, uh, uh, new experiences and, uh, as I say, many of these, people come back and say they were, a life-changing experience.

TERRY COONAN 44:14

yeah, absolutely, Bert. And I know that was for me. I mean, those internships that you made possible for me at Cincinnati, it impacted not just my career choice, but yeah, it shaped the very direction of my life. What the university has really loved here at FSU is that many of our students come back and they write an honors thesis so that they actually then get the research and writing experience of delving into an issue that they've seen on the ground. They've met stakeholders. They've often met victims. They've seen human rights issues kind of up close and personal, and they come back and they write an honors thesis. They become part of what we call our honors college here at FSU. And that's a huge focus for the university. It's a real investment in research and writing and publishing. Roger Smith: Now, students be doing that and the university has taken note that, Roger Smith: Oh, it's our human rights students that come back and do some of the most compelling scholarship work as undergraduates or as graduate students. So that's been another great Sort of contribute to the university research mission. And as you said, Bert, it changes lives as well. That, uh, I know we've had some great reunions of just from those of us that went through your program and just the chance to get to see soon. I just saw Kate Pongonis up in Washington, D. C. earlier this summer. It's like, you know, she's worked with the State Department for years and looking at the crime of aggression

and crimes against I mean, it's exciting wherever I go. It could be the South Sudan where, where I meet Sue Tatton. Uh, I, I get to University of Cincinnati law grads all over the world in the work that I do. So yeah, it gives back. And as you said, the students themselves become walking advertisements for both human rights work and human rights careers in particular. Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 46:14

Yep. I just had an email from, Kate Pongonis, uh, yesterday, and I think now they've moved her, uh, into where she's doing, uh, refugee kind of work now in the State Department, yeah.

TERRY COONAN 46:25

Oh, that's great. May want to talk to her. We're still working with about 150 Afghan families here in Tallahassee who were literally kind of parachuted in here when the Taliban retook control of, of, of Afghanistan. And the work Bert that we're doing, almost all of it involves families with girls. These were girls that as soon as the Taliban came back in, those girls were pulled out of school. They were fired from jobs. They were told wear the hijab and go back to your house. Uh, many of their families, of course, had worked also with the U S mission in the years that we were in Afghanistan. So they fled for their lives. And, it's been kind of a privilege for us at the human rights center to actually do all the pro bono legal work for them that they apply for a particular form of humanitarian parole. We then represent many of them in asylum proceedings as well.

BERT LOCKWOOD 47:24

yeah, I had one of those Terry Coonan, uh, moments when I, called um, was having a conversation with you, and looked at your watch and you said, oh, I've gotta leave, I gotta take a bunch of students there, a plane arriving with Afghan refugees, and we need to do their paperwork for them.

TERRY COONAN 47:46

But again, it's been a great service to get to offer the refugee community. And again, our undergraduate students have been tremendous. They have actually formed student groups, one called after they come, that it's entirely meant to basically work with Afghan families and especially their children to help them acclimate here to the United States. So kind of big brother, big sister stuff, playing soccer, but working with them on English skills, a whole host of things that our students actually jump at the opportunity for doing. The other great area for us, Congress has passed a special parole provision so that children of trafficking victims can be brought here to the United States. it really means, mothers in particular that left behind a child before they were trafficked here in the United States can bring those children here and get them out of harm's way, reunite them with the family. We've worked probably with several hundred children that are being brought into the United States. International Rescue Committee or IOM will actually accompany them. They'll get off a flight here in Tallahassee. We'll meet them at the airport with their mothers that they probably haven't seen in a couple of years. We'll meet those great, tearful reunions. We bring balloon teddy bears out to the

airport. And then I always take the kids to Golden Corral immediately. And I tell them, here's the all you can eat dessert bar. Here's the

chocolate cookies, the brownies. And my wife told me, yeah, and Terry, after you get those kids on a sugar high, you turn them back over their mothers. Their

BERT LOCKWOOD 49:33
to

TERRY COONAN 49:33
mothers have to do them. But I told my wife, it's because the next day they have to go to the county health department and get about 15 shots before they can register for school. I want their first impression of America to be the all you can eat dessert bar at Golden Corral.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 49:53
Well, Terry, I can add in you have always been very generous sharing desserts. It must have been about 1992 or 1993. I was six or seven years old when you first came to Cincinnati came out to dinner with the family. I had the privilege of sitting next to you. And I'll never forget the story that Um, we had dessert and it was ice cream M on top and I had. We're not eating your ice cream with M&Ms. So I decided that I would sneakily take your ice cream and your M&Ms and you caught me red handed and just said, it's all yours.

You've always been very generous with sharing dessert.

TERRY COONAN 50:37
Meredith, it's always about restorative justice. If you need ice cream with M&Ms, I'm happy to share.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 50:43
Right.

BERT LOCKWOOD 50:43
it's known as just right?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 50:47
Wah, wah. We'll, we send this to Barack Obama, dad. So you guys can enjoy your dad jokes together.

I also like that. My dad laughs at his own dad jokes. Like that's the epitome of a good dad joke.

TERRY COONAN 51:01
Exactly.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 51:03

Well, and Terry, you know, speaking of trafficking, um, you were part of the New York times article that came out in December, 2023 about children risking their lives, building American roofs. I will include the link in our show notes for our audience. It's absolutely incredible interactive investigative article that the times team did. you yourself were interviewed for it. And I know one of the subjects you talked about was a 15 year old boy who was building roofs and he was no longer in need of his labor. So the construction team left him on his own and was found, um, alone in a ditch crying. just wanted to know if you could talk to us more about child labor and trafficking labor happening, in the construction industry.

TERRY COONAN 51:51

Meredith, this is part of that larger human trafficking crime that we see around the country and it's child labor trafficking. And we see some U. S. citizen children that are trafficked in that area, but it's mostly foreign national children. And much of this is tied to immigration patterns. When I worked with the justice department in San Antonio, and again, that's been 30 years, but the person that was crossing undocumented across the U. S. border at that point was typically a male in their 20s. They were coming to work. What we now see are children. These are children fleeing MS-13. They're young girls fleeing sexual violence. They're crossing the U. S. They overwhelmed in many ways our capacities for actually caring for them. They live in tent cities often before they're reassigned what is supposed to be a family member or a care caregiver. What we're finding is that many of the caregivers have not been vetted, a they're they're actually traffickers. And this has been the pattern where our Human Rights Center has actually worked on behalf of a number of child labor trafficking victims, many of whom were in the roofing industry, the construction industry here in Florida. yeah, the case that you mentioned I was called out actually by our child welfare agency said, "There's this young Spanish speaking male. He's been found crying in a ditch. Will you come out and assist And when I came out and found out what his story was, yeah, he had been working for a dollar an hour. He had been lured from Chicago to be part of a work crew where he was labor trafficked. He was being worked 60 to 70 hours a week with no No protective gear, no training. It was up on a roof. This was following a number of It was following a number of hurricanes that we had here in Florida. And there were these traveling crews that would come in and rebuild people's roofs. And they weren't licensed and many of them were headed up by traffickers. And there was a whole host of young victims. And many of them completely undocumented who'd come straight to Florida. Others watched who had come who were supposedly under the care of a caregiver somewhere in the country. So they were actually being trafficked here in the construction and the roofing industry. We' seeing that also in agriculture, we're seeing it in fishing, and we're also seeing it in hotels and restaurants, that it's children being exploited. And probably 95% of those cases are foreign national children, both girls and boys. So, yeah, that's been another quite new area of advocacy for us, and it was a great investigative journalism piece that the New York Times did that said, yeah, this has permeated many of our industries here, both in Florida, and around the United States. And people are looking the other way in part because, oh, it's just labor trafficking. That's not as bad as sex trafficking. And every year I have to go to the Florida legislature and, again, train them as legislators, but also push for better, really more robust protections. Florida and many other states have lagged behind when it comes to labor trafficking, this assumption that, oh, it's not as bad. It's not as

bad. Sex trafficking is rape, but labor trafficking is just wage and hour violations. And it absolutely is not. I think all the young women that I've worked with, these are juveniles, victims of labor trafficking, had all been sexually assaulted as part of that exploitation. And many of the students that have lives in Florida. And many of the young men had been exposed to, quite brutal. I mean, it was literally slave labor that they were being forced to do. So, yeah, we continue to do a lot of that victim work, and it informs then both the research that we do and informs a lot of the advocacy and the legislative work that I do at the legislature. One thing I do have to human trafficking has actually been a quite good human rights issue for us to work because it is a bipartisan issue that, again, both sides of the aisle agree that this is abhorrent, that modern slavery has no place in America. But getting their attention on labor trafficking is sometimes a harder reach. It's one of the things that we're still working on. We were able to get through what we're called a safe harbor law. This was about 10 years back where Florida finally stopped arresting children for prostitution. It took several years of going to the legislature to convince them that, you know, if this were a in a normal sexual relationship with an adult, we'd call that statutory rape. Why are we actually prosecuting, convicting, and incarcerating children for something because \$30 has been exchanged. So it took several years, but Florida then created a safe harbor law, said that, no, we'll refer those children for services. And a lot of my work now has been in helping designing what are those services. We have about seven safe harbor shelters here in Florida, where children that are rescued from sex trafficking are brought. And it's all restorative work. You know, it's counseling, it's intensive therapy, it's job skills, getting them up to grade level. And it's basically helping kids that have been very, very victimized and helping them get kind of a new lease on life. So, again, it's also involved social workers and therapists. It's also involved working with some great police officers, some great law enforcement who really do get both detectives and victim advocates. So, yeah, that's part of the privilege of doing this kind of interdisciplinary human rights work. You get to work with a host of different professionals. And you get to see, you know, and Bert, you and I know, Eleanor Roosevelt was famous for saying, you know, when she was asked, where do human rights happen? And she famously replied, you in small places close to home. yeah, here in Florida, here around the country, we have a human rights mission. have it internationally as well. Bu, boy, it's such an important dimension of what we need to be about here in the United States as well.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 58:15

Absolutely, Terry. And I also wanted to mention that when I worked sex trafficking in Southeast Asia, particularly West Calcutta, India, I worked with an NGO, Women Interlink Foundation that was supported by rescue nonprofits throughout Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, and they rescued young girls from sex trafficking and child marriage. And women interlink foundation would take them in and provide shelter homes for them that could range from 100 to 300 young girls and women. And then when the girls reached 18, they were craving independence and their own livelihood. And they wanted socioeconomic opportunities to be financially free from the shelter homes. I was in that work for five years with my former company. And I can tell you, when I was traveling around the world, throughout UK, Europe, back to the you know, doing networking and raising awareness every time I met somebody, they would say, Well, you know, the leading expert in trafficking across the globe you need to talk to is Terry Coonan. And then

I would have the very humble brag moment to say, Oh, he's a very dear friend. He's known me my whole life almost. I

TERRY COONAN 59:31

I've shared M&M's with you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 59:32

Exactly, exactly. So, you hold a very dear not only to my but you are such an inspiration to me and all the work I do. it is such a privilege to know the Urban Morgan Institute was your starting off point.

TERRY COONAN 59:47

Absolutely Absolutely was and continues to very much shape and impact the work that we do here at Florida State University. And, Bert, we're grateful for the number of trips that you have made to help us out with our mission here as well.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:00

Terry, you make us proud. we're honored to have you associated with us. You're doing incredible work. this has been a opportunity to take some of your time to, to share, your work with a wider audience, I want to thank you ever so much your, uh, friendship and, uh, the work that you do, keep it up.

TERRY COONAN 1:00:21

Well, great, Bert. And we look forward to you continuing to help shape our mission with opportunities. You know, many of the films that we've brought here in recent years have been thanks to you. had a great film festival this year that featured a number of those films. So, yeah, I love the Human Rights Network that we're a part of. And I love the connection, obviously, going back years with you.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:00:44

Terrific. Thank you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:00:45

Thank you, Terry, and congratulations again on the 20-year anniversary, and we hope you'll come back to the podcast and join us for another episode. there will always be much to talk about. We'd love to, on a future episode, talk about your work in Kosovo and many other programs. and, truly, thank you so much for being on this new podcast. We appreciate it deeply.

TERRY COONAN 1:01:03

Meredith , I look forward to our paths continuing to cross. All right?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:01:11

Thank you for joining us for this week's episode with Professor Terry Coonan. At a time when the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable communities are facing immense persecution in the U. S. legal system and discrimination around the world, Terry has spent decades representing those seeking safety, protection, and justice. My dad and I are grateful to Terry not only for the work he has done on behalf of vulnerable communities, but also for the generations of students he has helped inspire to pursue careers in human rights. If you are enjoying Human Rights, Conversations Across Generations, please make sure you are subscribed, and feel free to leave us a review, as well as share this episode with a friend or colleague. You can reach out to us at humanrightsconversations@gmail.com. Until Until next time.