Human Rights – Conversations Across Generations
Episode: Lacey Stone
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MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04
Hi, welcome to our podcast, Huma Rights,Conversations Across Generations. I'm Meredith Lockwood, founder of Lockwood Creative, a purpose-driven creative agency. And I'm here with my dad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hey listeners, in today's episode, my dad and I are thrilled to welcome Lacey Stone, the Chief Development Officer at USA for UNHCR, the U. S. Partner of the United Nations Refugee Agency, with more than two decades of experience across organizations such as UNICEF USA, PATH, and St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, Lacey works at the intersection of philanthropy, partnerships, and global humanitarian impact, mobilizing support for refugees around the world. As we mark Women's History Month and reflect on International Women's Day on March 8th, we focus on a powerful new effort led by women for women. Lacey joins us to discuss Building Better Futures, a $15 million campaign working to fund a thousand higher education scholarships for refugee women and girls. At a time when refugee girls remain far less likely to access higher education, this initiative is helping reshape both who gives and who benefits in good philanthropy. and join us as we welcome Lacey Stone to the show.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:26
Lacey, my dad and I are so honored that you can join us as we highlight young girls and women refugees from around the world, particularly this month in March as it is Women's History Month. So this seems like a perfect time to have you on our show. and I'm going to let my dad kick us off a little bit to hear about how you got started in this work.

BERT LOCKWOOD 2:46
Lacey, I intrigued by the Pittsburgh connection. are you from Pittsburgh?

LACEY STONE 2:51
so I went to undergraduate school in Pittsburgh and I spent some of my childhood in Pittsburgh, but my dad was actually in the army. So he moved around quite a bit. Uh, but I've called, I, I, you know, I'll call Pittsburgh home, even though it was, um, kind of, fits and starts, but always Pennsylvania. Uh, my family's in Pennsylvania now, but I live in Seattle.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:10
did you have uh, exposure to the City of Asylum? They, they have sort of interesting program for refugee scholars,

LACEY STONE 3:18
No, not while I was So I, I, I left Pittsburgh in 2006. so I haven't, I haven't lived there since then. but Seattle where I live now is actually, um, a safe asylum city as well. So I actually didn't know that about Pittsburgh, but very happy to hear that. And I'll certainly want to look more into it my brother lives there now too.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:37
Oh, okay. you're back from Rwanda, right?

LACEY STONE 3:41
Yes. Yes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:42
did meet any memorable characters while you were there? said someone that stands out in your mind cause I take it one of the things from the fundraising strategy, is to be able to tell people stories.

LACEY STONE 3:57
Absolutely

BERT LOCKWOOD 3:58
numbers don't you a hundred thousand refugees just doesn't sort of register where the, the storytelling of a uh, individual can be very compelling.

LACEY STONE 4:07

Absolutely. Yeah, I think, you something about my role, in my job, I think um, stays in the background a little bit, but is so important, uh, is this ability to bear witness to the stories and to the narratives that refugees themselves are, are living, and to allow refugees to be at the center of that storytelling, to share in their own words what their experiences are. Uh, I think it is just as important to the mobilizing of resources, that is so front and center in my role, is being able to bear witness, to elevate those stories, and to share them, uh, with people, with individuals, companies, foundations across the United States. And, you know, I, I had such an amazing opportunity in Rwanda to meet some truly incredible young women, scholars, who have truly gone through some unimaginable, tragic circumstances. but what stood out to me so much is that despite these tragic circumstances that forced them to flee their homes, to leave everything behind, sometimes traveling with just the clothes on their backs, uh, that the resilience and the resolve, uh, was something that was a commonality across every single individual. So, um, I had the opportunity to speak to, and so whether it was in an elementary school where I'm talking to young children who are hungry for opportunity and asking, what can we do to get more scholarships? What can we do to learn more about how we can get opportunities to, to, to learn and to have more books in our schools? Um, those conversations that, you know, the young childhood level to then conversations with current DAFI scholars who are young refugee women and girls who have earned scholarships to be able to continue their higher education. and those scholarships, uh, and those scholarships also include living expenses. It includes the cost of accommodation, uh, their books and kind of like a wraparound for these young women. what stood out to me again is that resilience and that resolve, but the determination and the passion, not just to continue their own studies, but to use what they learn and to be able to take those opportunities back to their own communities to better the society. it's not just an individualistic, you know, if I get this degree, I will be able to earn a better living and create a better life for myself. It is if I earn this degree, I will then be able to mentor young students in my community. I will be able to use those skills to be able to create economic opportunities in my community. And, I'll share one story, a young gal, her name was Benny. Um, I will never forget. I sat down at a table. She came and sat right across from me. She sat, she looked me right in the eye. She told me that she wanted to be a professor. So she wants to get her PhD. She's currently, uh, in her undergraduate studies and her exact words. she said, we no longer depend on men. No marriage is not an achievement. Marriage is a choice. My education is my achievement and just, it will stick with me. Ever. Exactly. but she was just so, I mean, it would be impossible for me to share, you know, all of the different anecdotes of these remarkable young women. But she was one of the first people I had the opportunity to speak to and I was just so impressed with the passion, the determination, the confidence as she sat down. and, and how remarkable, right? This is somebody again, who has left everything behind. This is somebody who has gone through some unspeakable, uh, tragedies that she was escaping violence or war or persecution to be here. And what she wants more than anything is to get her education so that she can contribute more to her society and to her community. What more noble, uh, cause really is there. And so I feel like it's part of my mission to be able, again, to elevate these stories and to, to bear witness and to share what I've learned so that Benny's story does not stay in a vacuum between the two of us, but rather that it has the opportunity to be amplified as much as, as possible.

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:27
That's, that's wonderful. I don't know if you watch, uh, MS Now, I guess it but Lawrence O'Donnell.

LACEY STONE 8:33
Yes.

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:34
Does the stuff in Malawi. that very sort of similar girls scholarship to change lives and, how impactful that, that, that can be, that's a wonderful story.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 8:45
And Lacey, another story I love, from your work and your team's work, with the United Nations Refugee Agency,

BERT LOCKWOOD 8:52
Um, yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 8:53
and this one I read in the 2024 DAFI annual report of their scholar Serna, who grew up in South Africa after her parents fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that Serna developed, like, a very early interest in technology and would often stay after school to use the class of American friends. Classroom Computers and speak to the school's IT staff and wanting to learn more about computer science and engineering and daydreaming of what her future could look like. And what I thought was remarkable is not just the scholars, the program helps, but the way the community outreach provides accessibility because it was her mom who attended one of the community events, um, hosted by UNHRC, partner study, uh, where she learned about this opportunity that her daughter could actually pursue university education and really build that future she was dreaming of. Could you tell us about the importance of the local outreach and partnerships when we want to help these brilliant young women who are eager for more scholarship opportunities?

LACEY STONE 10:09
Absolutely. I think the local outreach is essential because the information doesn't always reach refugee families through formal channels. And so programs like DAFI only work when students actually know that these opportunities exist. And that's where our trusted community partners really come in. So in Serna's case, it was a simple outreach session that was hosted by UNHCR's partner, Study Trust. That simple outreach session changed the trajectory of her life, uh, without that community touchpoint, she may never have learned that university was within reach. And so I think that our local partners are truly so instrumental in bridging the gap between the potential of these young refugees and then the possibility of that greater future.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 10:58

It makes me remember like, a wonderful story that I have been able to see firsthand is from 2015 to 2019, I was able to work with the most amazing group of young women artisans in Calcutta, India, where I partnered with an NGO, Women Interlink Foundation, and it was Bengali women led and founded and they provided education, shelt, and jobs to young girls and women who'd overcome trafficking, child marriage, gender discrimination, and And back then I was able to go to help help them with their jewelry training program, which we were able to help them with their jewelry training program, which we were able to build a sustainable business model for them for socioeconomic pathways Now, fast forward to 2026, some of those women are now mothers. And they've been able to save and earn a living. And the first thing that they started saving for is their daughter's education, because they know that is one of the most powerful tools to break the cycle of gender inequality. And I have seen how women, they put back into their community and they invest not only in themselves, but they're thinking ahead, which takes us to Building Better Futures Campaign.

LACEY STONE 12:16
Absolutely. I mean, I think you nailed it, right? When a young refugee woman gains access to education, that impact ripples. It ripples outward. And so that woman is then more likely to earn an income, she's more likely to raise healthier and better educated children, and she's more likely to participate in the decision-making in her home and in her community. And I think that UNHCR's DAFI Scholarship Program really illustrates this quite vividly, right? We see alumni of the program go on to become teachers, to become health workers, to become engineers, entrepreneurs, and those individuals are then driving the economic inclusion, thereby strengthening their entire community. And so I think about it as education for, for refugee women. Education isn't just changing one life trajectory. It's really shifting what's possible for an entire next generation. And I think that's what's so exciting and impactful about this program.

BERT LOCKWOOD 13:17
Lacey, when I was moving NYU to

accepted this at something called the World Peace Through Law Center. And the job that I... Had been hired was State Department funded, and it was, to around the world to, try to get, uh, countries that had not ratified the Refugee Convention and Protocol to, to ratify them. and I remember at the time, that about 40 percent of the UNHCR's budget, what came from the United States. I that's probably very different you, I mean, particularly this administration, that's sort of gotten out of the, the, the funding. be, I would think it's much more challenging in this environment, the kind of work that you're doing is, is more essential because of the fact that the U. S. government pulled back significantly.

LACEY STONE 14:20
Yeah, I would say, well, first and foremost, the U. S. government still does remain UNHCR's largest contributor. That said, there have been some devastating funding cuts that are having tremendous, impacts across, across the globe, quite honestly. And when it comes to refugee youth, when it comes to education, the funding it's just so devastating. Um, we can see from a

numbers perspective in last year that the number of DAFI scholars who had been able to receive scholarship support, that number dropped from more than 9,000, of, uh, to under 8,000 last year.And what that means is that thousands of talented students, many of whom ranked at the very top of their classes, they had no path to university. to give you a sense of kind of the scale in, in, in 2024 alone, we had over 5,000 applicants who were competing for fewer than 900 scholarship slots. And that number 900 is, is so tiny, right? So every dollar short is leaving opportunity on the table and young people are then losing their to shape their, their futures. And so when we think about funding cuts, we're thinking about them, um, really on this kind of holistic scale as well. I mentioned the example for education, but even, uh, at more of like a baseline level being in Rwanda, we learned that some of those who are most vulnerable are receiving a total of $2 per month for food rations. You can imagine how far $2 per month might bring you. A what that translates to realistically is that many people are making impossible choices for themselves and for their families. And unfortunately it means that many people are going hungry. Um, these are unacceptable, quite frankly, results. Um, and I think that it highlights the need for my role, uh, which is to mobilize resources from the private sector here in the United States. It makes that role, I think, even more urgent, for us and for me specifically to be able to share these stories and to talk about the role that the private sector can play in helping to close some of those funding gaps. Because some of these funding gaps, uh, for specific things, are not that insurmountable. Now the needs for UNHCR, uh, we don't have enough funding to the tune of billions of dollars. And so I'm not under a disillusion here to think that the private sector is going to make up that funding gap. Even when the, the governments are supporting us at the, the highest level they ever had, there's billions of dollars of gap between what UNHCR needs to perform its work and to be able to provide the protection, the shelter, the emergency relief, and the support to those who have been forced to flee, those gaps always exist, but those gaps are becoming greater and greater and we'll see those ripple effects for years to come. And, and those are the kinds of gaps that we're really trying to urgently close.

BERT LOCKWOOD 17:38
I was curious. it's part of the strategy and, and I know you of levels um, individuals that you involve, but are there some where you actually, hook them up with a particular refugee so that they of have an identity, in terms of watching them, know, proceed through, their education how they're doing.

LACEY STONE 18:00
No, we don't take a, an individual sponsorship model or approach. Our approach is really based on, on the equity agenda. And so ensuring those who are the hardest to reach and the most vulnerable have access to programs. UNH follows that needs-based approach to, uh, provide individualized, um, support and services to each individual based on what those needs are. And not necessarily around education, but I'll give you an example of how that, how that can look. One of the programs that UNHCR, one of the support programs we provide is cash based assistance. And the reason that we are moving towards this cash-based assistance and why cash-based interventions have been so successful is because it truly the choice to the individual refugee themselves, and it allows them to live their lives with dignity, to be able to

decide for themselves what is most needed. It may very well be that when somebody crosses a border, what they need is a blanket, but that is not to say that every person crossing a border needs a blanket. It may also be that somebody crossing a border needs diapers, somebody needs money for rent, somebody needs food, and so by supplying cash based assistance, it puts that decision making power in the hands of the person who knows best what they need, which is the refugees themselves and so, I'm excited about our cash-based assistance programing. I think it's one of the best interventions that we can provide and it speaks to the mission of what UNHCR does, which is restoring that hope, restoring that opportunity, but ensuring that we are protecting and supporting refugees with dignity.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 19:42
I completely agree. I think allowing them to have and agency of where they use their funding, they know what they need. And many times it's a crisis and it's an immediate need. And really a goal is for them to be able to one day get back home.

So

LACEY STONE 19:57
exactly

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 19:58
what need in that dire moment, I really appreciate the United Nations refugee agency, that your team recognizes that they know what they need. Sometimes I think there are certain institutions that think they know better. And I absolutely understand why, but we've really have to know the hands on the ground approach to really provide. that partnership and help in that way. And thing I thought was really interesting for our listeners to know is just how far donations and fundraising can stretch in your program. So for example, $1 million gift can translate four years of tuition, housing, and essentials for 80 refugee women. And I know in fundraising. If you work in it, a million is not a lot, but for other listeners, a million is like, wow, that's so much money. But that, I mean, you guys stretch it really well to support 80 women, especially as like Americans. We know how much higher education costs these days. I was really curious if you could speak a little more to those numbers and the impact.

LACEY STONE 21:14
Yeah, absolutely. And so I'll say, first, you know, going back to the DAFI program, for a few decades now, D has now supported over 26,000 refugee students worldwide. And when we talk about what that support entails, it's exactly as you said, it provides not just the tuition, but it's also providing learning materials. It's providing transportation, a modest living allowance, mentorship, academic advising, language classes when those are needed, psychosocial support. A so it's this wraparound holistic model that is helping students adjust to campus life, t stay enrolled, and to thrive. It really goes beyond simply an academic scholarship, because the needs of these individuals is not just to pay for schooling. It's all of those other things to help them be successful, and then to have opportunities for a career path after they graduate, because education is one step, but it's really this wraparound holistic support that UNHCR is

providing. And education is really, and education is really, really crossing all of the different programmatic areas that UNHCR works, whether it's healthcare, whether it's education, whether it's protection. Our work is really to be as wraparound and holistic as possible, and to ensure that we're reaching the largest number that we can with safety, wi protection, with shelter, with whatever it is that they may need to be. And so as related to, you know, the costs and how, what that impact actually means. I think, you know, depending on what type of impact our supporters, our donors are, are looking to make, um, we can, because UNHCR is, is such a robust organization. We can really individualize the impact that is possible based on the that our supporters, uhm, really want to lean into based on what they're looking for And so I want to have a conversation with a donor or with a supporter that starts with the amount and starts with how much is in your wallet that you want to give. I want to start conversations with what is the legacy that you want to leave. W is the impact that you want to make? Let's start there and then we can build together what it could look like to achieve that impact. And so all of our fundraising within the United States, especially with our partners and with our individual supporters, it starts with that question of impact and then we build out from there, which is a little bit different, I think, than the historical fundraising model, which may have started with, with a dollar amount. And so we're seeing this, I would call it a shift, uh, a shift away from transactional giving towards transformational partnerships. And, and that's the work of my team at USA for UNHCR is to really build those transformational partnerships that start with impact at the center and are always at every turn considering what do refugees themselves need and what do refugees themselves say, are their hopes and their desires because of the center of everything we do. Refugees have to be represented there.

BERT LOCKWOOD 24:48
I have two things, you have a strength has always been one of my biggest weaknesses. even though I totally believe in good work that we're doing at the Morgan Institute, I hate asking people for money. and I don't know if it's I don't want to feel indebted to anyone. my experience, when I look at the best people that I of, that have come through life that are, are good fundraisers. they have come from the upper class, if you will, where it was part of the culture that you were, just expected to give money. uh, uh, it's, uh, I, I admire, your ability. And the, the other I was curious, if you've had any, uh, contact Seattle, uh, university. Their, new president, I think he's been there a couple of years was the, former dean of Cornell Law School. And his she was in charge of their international women's rights, program. And she did a, she did a book for my, book series with the University of Pennsylvania press. that she's India, Indian, uh, heritage. and so it was dealing some women's issues uh, India in, in part, I'm going send you their contact information, but I think she in particular would very helpful to you.

LACEY STONE 26:16
I would love that and funny um, related, so I received an outreach a few years ago, maybe five years ago or so by now, from somebody who was a professor at Seattle University asking if I would be interested in serving as a mentor, to one of their international, uh, international affairs students and I said absolutely, and so I worked with the student for about six months, and now we're kind of in the program. So each year, uh, we get outreach to ask, you know, I have students who are interested in this line of work or this particular area of study. Do you

know anybody who would be a good fit? And so I just helped to match somebody, from a different UN agency here in Washington DC, with another student in Seattle University. But I am always thrilled to have the opportunity to work with young people, especially those that are in my backyard, in my community who have an interest in this type of work. And it relates to what you, you said kind of at the top, right. I have had a career in fundraising essentially for over 20 years, but my background, my family background is not one, uh, from wealth or ourselves. My background, you know, my parents got married when they were teenagers. My dad joined me. My dad joined the army. My mom worked at a Dairy Queen. uh, a few decades, you know, they, they built a life and lives for my brothers and for me. Um, and it is, I feel like it's such a privilege that I get to do this work and that I get to approach it from maybe a different, uh, background, a different lived experience than, than others may historically. Uh, but I, I have just so much gratitude to my parents and so much appreciation, for the values they instilled in me and for their ability, t build a life for themselves like they that allowed me to dream, um,I think much bigger than they would have even thought imaginable. And so what a gift, right. That I, I got to be, my brother was the first and I got to be the um, child in our families to ever receive our own college education. And so that for me, um, it's really special. Yeah. It's,

BERT LOCKWOOD 28:20
Okay.

LACEY STONE 28:20
it's quite meaningful.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 28:21
That's really special. And dad, you will remember that our local dairy queen in Cincinnati, Ohio was only open from May to August. And it was the deal, like after a soccer game or a swim practice, my dad would be like, oh, I think the St. Bernard's Dairy Queen is And so my sister, my brother and I would like in the car and he would take us. So that's a really beautiful story. Tha you for sharing your family. Yes. And Lacey, just for fun, were you a fan of dairy queen growing up? I, I'm not sure if your mom was still there when you were growing up, but was that a Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh

LACEY STONE 28:59
No, so funny enough, the dairy queen was in Georgia. I was born in Fort Stewart, G. That's where the Dairy Queen career, if you will, happened. Um, later on when my parents were in Pennsylvania, my mom went on to work in a hotel, and different, different jobs from there. But we remained quite loyal to the local Tastee Freez in Milton, Pennsylvania, as an aside.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 29:21
Tastee Freez. I don't know if I know that one as well.

LACEY STONE 29:23

don't know if it was a chain at all. It may have been just local to, to central PA. I'm not sure. I don't even know if it's still there.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 29:29
I, I, I've heard of it. And I, and I do want to ask since your dad was in the army and you must've moved around quite a bit, did you mostly stay in the United States or did you go abroad as a family?

LACEY STONE 29:40
I always stayed in the United States and my mom and my brothers did as well. My dad was stationed in Germany for five years and he went, we stayed behind.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 29:49
I always am curious from how many times, and it must be so various for families when you are part of an army family, how often you move?

LACEY STONE 30:00
Yeah, yeah, uh, we moved quite a but it it became a way of life and, um, I was quite fortunate my parents were then able to buy their first home when I was in, I think, fifth grade. Uh, and so I was grounded in a home since, since that age, my older brother moved more than I did, but I was quite lucky that I, you know, went to my high school and junior high all in the same, in the same town.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 30:24
And curious from a Midwest standpoint, what brought you to the Pacific Northwest?

LACEY STONE 30:29
Ah, love, love brought me to the Pacific Northwest. Um, my husband, I was living in New York City and my husband that I met, or my now husband that I met, uh, , or my now husband and I met in New York City, our tables were just very close to one another while we were having lunch separately. Uh, he was visiting a friend that weekend from Seattle, and I lived in New York and we struck up a conversation, and long story short, I then moved to Seattle and now we've been married for, oh gosh, it'll be 10 years this year. 10 years this year.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:01
Oh,

BERT LOCKWOOD 31:02
Wow.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:02
congratulations.

BERT LOCKWOOD 31:03

Okay.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:03
Happy.

LACEY STONE 31:04
Yeah. Thank you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:05
As a former New Yorker as well. I'm just curious, would I know the lunch spot?

LACEY STONE 31:09
you might, it was Heartland Brewery. It's closed now, but Heartland Brewery had a few different locations. It was the Union Square location.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:16
That's what I was going to ask.

LACEY STONE 31:17
Yeah. On a fateful father's day in 2012. It's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:23
There

BERT LOCKWOOD 31:23
Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:23
are those stories that often these days due to like the apps and everything. So

LACEY STONE 31:28
I

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:28
what a

LACEY STONE 31:28
know.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 31:29
beautiful story.

LACEY STONE 31:30

It's a fun one. Yeah. I never would have imagined or guessed in 2012 that I would be living in Seattle. And as just a funny kind of aside, but we had decided, what we dated cross country for a little while and decided one of us was going to need to make the move. and it was always intended that I would move to Seattle for two years and then he would move back to the East coast with me. Uh, so we would call it a pilot and that pilot started in 2013. So I would say the pilot was successful because now in 2026, I continue to live in Seattle and have no desire to move back permanently to the East coast.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 32:08
Like it is quite successful. I actually wanted to ask you about when you, in 2012, at that time you were working for UNICEF and you spent

LACEY STONE 32:16
Mm-hmm

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 32:16
eight

LACEY STONE 32:16
years.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 32:17
at UNICEF for our listeners, if you could tell us what drew you humanitarian work and what your background from UNICEF to working at PATH, what that taught you when started working at

LACEY STONE 32:33
Yeah, absolutely. So if I back across my career, I think that there is a clear through line and the through line is that I've always really been drawn to roles where I can connect people, resources, and ideas to make a meaningful change. And in that sense of purpose for me has really guided all of the career decisions that I've made. I think I was fortunate enough to see quite early, just how powerful partnerships can be when they're grounded in shared values. so we talked a bit about transformational relational fundraising work, whic is quite different than transactional fundraising. And so that has really been what has motivated me as that opportunity to bring together, whether it's civil society, foundations, corporations, individuals, bringing people together around a common purpose showed me just how much impact can be possible if we're working collectively. And then I think what I um, even more deeply as time went on is that what has helped to really motivate me is when I'm able to help people feel very personally connected to missions that are connected to missions that might feel really big or, or, or even too distant, for folks to kind of their arms around. And so what ultimately drew me to USA for UNHCR, was about how I can mobilize resources, but also mobilize compassion and opportunity and create pathways for our supporters to be able to stand with refugees and to be able to ensure that those who have been forced to flee can rebuild their lives. with dignity, with dignity, with dignity, with safety and with hope. And I'll just share one more kind of little

Uh, I worked for somebody once who, who stated philanthropy is about generosity, not wealth. And that has always stuck with me, uh, because that generosity can take so many different shapes and it doesn't limit philanthropy. philanthropy. It doesn't limit philanthropy to only those who are on, you know, the highest spectrum on, on wealth, that spectrum. And so I've tried to dedicate my career to, uh,being able to build partnerships and, and systems that really make that generosity actionable, uh, especially for communities like those who have been forced to flee, deserve, and who deserve to be seen, to be supported, and ultimately to be empowered

BERT LOCKWOOD 35:00
Fascinating. Yep. I wanted to go back your Army, family. the, I, in my University of Pennsylvania book series, I have, 180 books, um, that have been published. And one of my favorites is by Jennifer Schirmer, and it's called the Guatemalan Military Project. And when I got the manuscript, I was absolutely stunned by the story that came out and what these military people in Guatemala who had committed these atrocities admitting to and, and I said to her, know, I don't understand how could you possibly have gotten them to, talk about these things?" And she said, she thought there were two factors. one that she was a woman and they sort of enjoyed bragging, but she said, The she was an army brat, um, that she sort of knew the culture and, and was comfortable, you know, talking to uh, military figures. um, I'm not suggesting that, translates into your fundraising. I always remember the about the fact that grew up in a military family assisted in, in how she approached people, if you will

LACEY STONE 36:20
So interesting. Yeah, I never, I never thought about that. And so I don't know if it does, but I'll tell uh, it's not just my dad, right? I come from a, I would say a long line of military men in my family. Um, so my dad, of course is, uh, retired from the army. Both of my brothers, uh, also are veterans of the army. My younger brother having served in Iraq. And then my husband as well is a, he's a veteran of the Navy. both of my grandfathers, my father-in-law. So there is a long, rich history Of men in my family and now, in extended family as well, who do have military background. So, I don't know if that translates at all my work. I couldn't tell you, necessarily, I haven't dug into it. but chosen it was quite different, right? It was a big veer, from that kind of historical background of, of what my had, had in, into. but I, I certainly think that all of my experiences, whether those be family historical experiences, whether they be work experiences, all of them in some way have contributed, to who I am today. And I take all of those experiences with hopefully to be able to continue to improve, not just professionally, but to always be working towards being the best version of me that I can be.

BERT LOCKWOOD 37:44
you know, that's that's Thank you for sharing that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 37:48
Dad, I was thinking when Lacey was sharing her story moving all over the country, you probably switched schools a few times, had to say goodbye to friends and make new friends. And I'm not sure if you consider yourself an extrovert, an introvert or any of the in-betweens.

But growing up, my family and I would move abroad when my dad would teach international human rights law in England. And I really look at that as a backbone for being a storyteller myself. And I love to meet new people. It is one of my favorite things. I'm also a social connector. And I look back about going to a new school in a new country, learning the culture and having to put yourself out there to to make new friendships. So kind of getting to know you a little that kind of sparked a similarity in perhaps our journey. And, I think fundraising, to be able to do it well and to be able to have empathy and compassion and look at the lens of generosity, that itself, pun intended, is a gift. And fundraising and development, it's a very hard thing to do, particularly during different political climates. And I'm just so impressed with you and your team. you guys have really hefty goals, particularly for the Building Better Future campaign. was wondering if you tell us two things about that. One, what are your goals? And I know you have a goal for like 2030. A I also read the titled, Fundraising Wasn't Built for Women, So We Built Something New. And it's an insidephilanthropy.com for our listeners. I will always link it in our show notes. But I love this article. And I love how it focuses on women and women giving, as well as where the generational wealth build is going to be in our not far future.

LACEY STONE 39:45
Yeah, yeah. So I love so much of what you just said. I'm going to try to tie a few things together First, I'll start with kind of the impetus and the inspiration for Building Better Futures. And really, the Building Better Futures initiative was inspired by a simple, a really simple but powerful truth. If we want more refugee women and girls in university, then we need more women at the center of the philanthropic model. We saw that nearly every year, thousands of young women with the talent and the drive to become engineers, nurses, teachers, and leaders. They were being turned away, not because they weren't qualified, but because the number of scholarships are limited. And at the same time, we know that women are driving the majority of philanthropic decisions today, but traditional fundraising models really weren't built with them in mind. And so Building Better Futures kind of emerged. : From that gap and it brings together women who want to change both sides of the equation, who gives and who benefits. And then it channels that collective force into this effort to expand access to higher education. And I think for us, it was really essential that this be women led, because women are uniquely positioned to recognize the gaps that hold girls and women back. And as I said, they're also leading the way in how modern philanthropy works. I think that women naturally gravitate towards more relational giving, towards more transparency, towards storytelling, and that building of collective action. And so this campaign has really intentionally tapped into those strengths. And it's been co-created by women who are just so deeply invested in lifting up that next generation of female leaders. They're literally traveling the world to meet with refugee scholars, to understand the barriers firsthand, and then to bring more women into the movement. And so we've designed it this way to ensure that the effort itself really reflects the values of today's major donors who are women, and it directs those resources to the women and girls whose potential historically has been overlooked. Specifically on the goals for DAFI, as I mentioned, DAFI is providing higher education scholarships for decades. We know that that program and that system works. We also know, as we shared, that the demand is skyrocketing, but the funding hasn't kept pace. And so our campaign is designed to help close the gap,

specifi for refugee women and girls, to raise $15 million and fund 1,000 scholarships for female scholars. The Building Better Futures initiative will expand DAFI's reach. It will strengthen its current impact. And most importantly, it will ensure that more women are not just accessing university, but that they have the housing, the materials, the mentorship, and the community support that they need to graduate and then to lead.

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:53
Wow.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 42:53
And I thought this was really is that women are often unseen in their philanthropic contributions, despite making 85% of all philanthropic decisions and being set to inherit 70% of the world's wealth.

LACEY STONE 43:10
Yep. It's fascinating, right? That, yes, this Building Better Futures campaign is now intentionally shifting the balance on both sides, because, you're right, on the giving side, we know that women are already driving 85% of that philanthropic decision-making. They're projected to 70% of global wealth, but I don't think that the traditional fundraising models are really designed with women's leadership, women's values, or preferences in mind. And so we've tried to design this campaign by creating a space where women are designing the strategy, they're setting the vision, but more importantly, they're co-creating the experience. And so on the beneficiary side, if you will, it's directing resources towards those refugee women and girls who have historically had that disproportionately small share of philanthropic investment. And by funding 1,000 higher education scholarships specifically for women, the campaign is ensuring that those who have been underrepresented as those beneficiaries are now centered as those primary recipients. And so it's bringing together women donors and women scholars in this shared story of both possibility and power, quite frankly.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 44:27
resource I want to link for our listeners is the Building Better Futures video campaign, The team did such a beautiful job showcasing the scholars, these brilliant and engaging young women who get to tell their own story of how their education has impacted their lives, as well as what they're dreaming of in their future. you know, the world is their oyster. They have gone through very difficult hardships, but they just continue to look forward. And absolutely was inspired by that video. And to quote you in one of your recent interviews you said, "storytelling can be used to build community, not just gifts

LACEY STONE 45:17
I

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 45:17
When we're able to use storytelling during intimate gatherings and allow women themselves to be their own tellers, they share their own learnings and it helps spark deeper connections".

And I just wanted to take a minute to tell you that is completely true. And sometimes I think in the fundraising and nonprofit space, we're so focused on, big fundraising events and key initiatives and research and strategy. But we have to be able to tell the stories and build those bridges to share connections, not just with donors, but the audience that supports your work and wants to learn more about your work.

LACEY STONE 46:03
I couldn't agree more. I think that that storytelling element is so critical. And we've talked a lot today about this shift away from transactional giving more towards these transformational partnerships. And storytelling is at the center of that. And so we know that as women are prioritizing community collaboration and impact,it's the ability to relate to one another through these stories. And it's centering the refugee stories themselves so that we can truly lead those transformational partnerships. And it is it's a it's a shift in philanthropy. It's a shift in the entire model. But I think it's a very welcome one where we're seeing when women lead and when storytelling is at the center. You know, we talked a little bit before about fundraising models. But when women are leading, I think that that naturally leads to the philanthropy becoming more relational, more transparent and more ambitious. That's why we don't start with amount, the dollar amount, because we're actually seeing through this type of initiative that we are seeing deeper engagement, which then translates to bigger commitments. And it's a powerful cycle of women lifting up other women. And then that's when real systems can can start to change.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 47:20
Absolutely. And right now, the refugee crisis is sadly growing. You know, just this week, we saw that 750,000 Lebanese have been displaced from their homes. And of course, we want them all to be able to get home safely and quickly. And in your line of work, of refugees to help is not decreasing. It is only increasing. And to date, we had said around 117 million refugees have been forcibly displaced from their home. And I thought it was interesting that I learned from you is that first-hand experience you've seen that many refugees stay near the borders of their homes because that's the goal. picks to become a refugee. Nobody wants to leave their home and their culture

for our listeners who have been inspired by our conversation, impacted by the work you're doing and want to help, what are some ways that they could get involved?

LACEY STONE 48:26
: Yeah, absolutely, and I think you're absolutely right, uh , first, nobody chooses to be a refugee, and the hope of most refugees is to return home, and that's why the vast majority of refugees stay close to the border of the country that they've left, and I'll share, you know, during my time in Rwanda, what I heard time and again, is that the greatest hope, the greatest desire, is to return home when it's safe to do so. What these women want more than anything is peace and stability. They want that peace, they yearn for that stability so they can go home. Uh, so, I think that that is just a really great, important ground setting, context for us. I think for anybody listening who feels inspired, there are so many meaningful ways that you can

support not just refugee education or the Building Better Futures movement that's fueling university scholarships for refugee women and girls. : There's also support you can provide to USA for UNHCR who helps, uh, so much with emergency relief protection, shelter, education, livelihoods, there's really no action too small to help open the door for a young person who simply needs a chance or an opportunity. And so the very best way as a fundraiser, I will tell you, is to become a monthly donor to USA for UNHCR. That ensures can support for students, for families, for individuals who rely on it. You can join the Building Better Futures movement. Again, the higher education scholarship program for young women and girls that we have in the United States with a goal to raise $15 million to fund a thousand scholarships.You can also share these stories by amplifying refugee voices and then inviting others into the conversation. I can't overemphasize how important awareness is as a powerful catalyst for change. And then for those who want to go even deeper, we would love to talk to you about hosting a gathering, introducing the work to your own networks, and joining our growing community of supporters. I think when we tie it back to education, when somebody supports refugee education, th not just funding a scholarship. They're investing in future leaders who become teachers, engineers, and ultimately advocates that our world needs to reach that peace and stability that refugees and we all yearn for.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 50:57
And I was watching a few of the videos of the incredible scholars you have helped, it was really inspiring how many really want to also pursue medicine and health, because they've seen what conflict has done both physically, mentally, and emotionally, and they want to give back and they want to help future generations. that just really touched my heart when I was listening to their stories.

LACEY STONE 51:19
It's the programmatic segment. It's the largest field of study that we see scholars going into who earn these DAFI scholarships is the science and medicine biology type of path. And so that's truly inspiring. And it shows how much this work is truly needed to create that next generation of professionals who are contributing meaningfully to their societies. It just, I think it underlies how important and critical the work really is to give those individuals an opportunity and a to do it.

BERT LOCKWOOD 51:52
Laci, that's this has been a great great conversation. I wanted a little more light heartedly, uh, no that many years ago there was a novel that was, uh, written, uh, that featured, the, the Morgan Institute, by Human Rights Institute, uh, . . . sending one of our, uh, uh, interns to, uh, Greece to work with the, UNHCR. And it was It was called, uh, "A Well-Founded Fear", know, the, uh, standard, uh, for refugee status, Um, but the author in the English department creative writing, uh, Eh, was the husband of one of my students who was from Greece. Um, I don't think it became a bestseller, but:

LACEY STONE 52:32

Well, I will look it up. I wrote it down here, "well-founded fear." I look forward to looking that up. I've also written down the "Guatemalan Military Project", Burt. So

all of the references you've given me, I be sure to look into further.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:45
And, Lacey, now that you are part of the Lockwood legacy here at our podcast, you're also now part of the Urban Morgan family. So, there probably will be a gift parcel in the

BERT LOCKWOOD 52:57
Mark Adams:

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:57
mail to you with some Urban Morgan Human Rights Quarterly Um, and if you wear baseball cap or your husband, I designed some merch for Human Rights Quarterly.

LACEY STONE 53:07
some. Oh,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 53:08
So,

LACEY STONE 53:09
Meredith,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 53:09
I get, you're

LACEY STONE 53:09
yes.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 53:09
going to get In the mail.

L, this has been such a pleasure. than you so much for joining us.

BERT LOCKWOOD 53:17
Yeah. Thank you.

LACEY STONE 53:19
Truly. The pleasure is all mine. I'm so grateful for the opportunity. Really appreciate getting to meet you both. I've thoroughly enjoyed our conversation. So thank you for inviting me and thanks for the opportunity today.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 53:32
Wow, what an inspiring conversation with Lacey. My dad and I want to profusely thank her for joining us on our show. our conversation with her shows the power of storytelling and how it forms real, deep connections. Lacey's work reminds us that education is more than opportunity. It is a pathway to dignity, leadership, and long-term change. Through initiatives at UNHCR, like the Building Better Future Campaign, as well as the DAFI Scholarship Program, Refugee women and young girls are gaining the tools to rebuild their lives and strengthen their communities. To learn more about USA for UNHCR and the Building Better Futures Initiative, We invite you to explore the links in our show notes. If you have enjoyed this episode, please take a moment to follow, rate, and review Human Rights, Conversations Across Generations, and share it with others who care about advancing human rights and women empowerment around the world. Thank you, as always. Tune in next time.