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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** I am recording, so whenever you're ready.

[00:00:03] **Speaker 2** Oh, yeah. You can start by just saying your name and your title.

[00:00:06] **Speaker 3** My name is Commodore at the party, and I'm a teaching professor here at University of Wisconsin Law School. And I'm also the, director of the Global Legal Studies Center and the executive director of the human Rights program.

[00:00:19] **Speaker 2** And then can you just tell me a bit about your work and what your research.

[00:00:23] **Speaker 3** So I look at the link between human rights and environmental issues, especially climate change, and how a human rights framework would be useful to address mental pollution and degradation.

[00:00:37] **Speaker 2** And then talk to me about the wiki working group you're a member of. What do you guys research and what kind of questions are you asking?

[00:00:43] **Speaker 3** So I'm part of the working group, looking at, climate migration. So one of the things we want to look at is whether people are moving to Wisconsin because of climate change. There is some anecdotal evidence that people are moving here due to climate change impacts. But we don't know for sure. So we want to do a more scientific study on that. So that's what we are doing right now.

[00:01:12] **Speaker 1** Sorry. Can you? It might be awkward. Can you leave the other?

[00:01:15] **Speaker 2** Yes. Yes, definitely. Sorry. This can.

[00:01:19] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Maybe you take out the notebook. Then you're like a centimeter too much on the screen. I just would like her. Yes.

[00:01:26] **Speaker 2** Yes. That's perfect. Okay. And then when did you start studying human rights in the environment? And what got you interested in these topics?

[00:01:34] **Speaker 3** So, I'm originally from Sri Lanka. So when I start, I, when I was there, I, worked for an environmental NGO. And I realized that the lawyers that I did not really look at the impact of environmental issues on people, per se. And there was some court cases where, they evicted some people from a national park. And I realized that, by applying one framework, the framework of law, they were violating another. So, that really got me interested in the link between human rights and environment.

[00:02:14] **Speaker 2** And can you talk about why a healthy climate is a human right?

[00:02:18] **Speaker 3** So if you look at the impact of an unhealthy environment on people, like pollution causes, things like asthma and, you know, other health issues, polluted water, has, health impacts as well. And if you are displaced by a disaster, then, you know, you might lose everything you have, including your shelter, your possessions and things like that. So, and with climate change impacts, water is going to become scarce. Ten places are going to get drier, and, desertification is a problem. So all these impacts have, all these consequences have impacts on people and their. Right. So even, you know, right to life could be affected. Right to health, food, water, shelter, freedom of movement could be affected. So, you know, the whole range of rights could be affected by environmental degradation, especially climate change.

[00:03:33] **Speaker 2** And then you mentioned in our first interview that kind of the people who feel impacts are double whammy, feeling other impacts. Can you just talk about how what kind of communities are disproportionately affected by climate change?

[00:03:44] **Speaker 3** So if you look at the, the situation in the US especially, we know that minorities, have been, disproportionately affected by, things like, you know, redlining and things like that. These are the same communities that are affected, by mental degradation. We we have a history of, locating polluting industries in low income and minority communities. The environmental justice movement started as a result of that. So these are the same communities that are disproportionately affected by climate change. And then there are other reasons like age, disability, gender. So the communities that are already in a vulnerable situation, disproportionately affected by climate change, which is a justice issue as well.

[00:04:41] **Speaker 2** And why is it important to give a human face to climate change?

[00:04:44] **Speaker 3** So, when you look at how, climate change started, people still think that it's just an environmental problem. They don't realize that we are living through the consequences of climate change. So, highlighting that there are already victims of climate change, you know, identifying the victims and giving them a human face, I think is, important to bring the issue closer to the people. So that's why I said, you know, giving a human face to the problem is important.

[00:05:20] **Speaker 2** And why should people who might not really be thinking about things like climate change, migration, care about these things?

[00:05:26] **Speaker 3** So climate change is a global problem with localized impacts. Nobody will be able to escape the consequences. We cannot insulate ourselves from the consequences of climate change. So because everybody's affected, obviously some communities and countries are more effective than others. We are living through the consequences of climate change. So everybody should care about climate change because everybody's affected. And unfortunately, some communities have to move because of climate change. Even the in the US that our communities in Alaska that are being relocated or awaiting relocation, there's a community in Louisiana. That is being relocated to the mainland. And then people will move to Wisconsin, too, because it's safer. Than other parts of the country. So, I think everybody should, care about it because nobody will escape the consequences.

[00:06:30] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And then can you talk a bit about how climate change will impact things like public health and the economy?

[00:06:36] **Speaker 3** So, as I already mentioned, climate change has severe health impacts like air pollution causes more asthma, cases of asthma. There will be, less water even in the U.S., even with Great Lakes, there will be less water. So that has a big impact on health. But we should also think about the positive aspects. So if people walk more, then, you know, take and then drive, for example, that will have health benefits. So climate change is a good opportunity for us to, become healthier, transition to a healthier diet, a plant based diet which will have climate benefits as well as health benefits.

[00:07:28] **Speaker 2** And then you mentioned things like water scarcity, vector borne diseases, air pollution and mental health issues. Can you just talk a bit about what other kind of issues you think was missing?

[00:07:36] **Speaker 3** Mental health issues is a big, issue. It has not been studied too much. You know, extreme heat causes a lot of anxiety. And generally climate change is causing a lot of anxiety in the younger generation. Severe weather events. If you look at the US alone, last year, there had been, $1 billion weather disasters almost every two weeks on average. So that can cause intense anxiety in a lot of people, especially if you are directly affected. And it's a huge, economic issue as well. Right? So the mental health impacts the vector borne diseases and tropical diseases, which we haven't seen before, like malaria and dengue would become prevalent with increased temperatures.

[00:08:33] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And then is climate migration already happen happening?

[00:08:36] **Speaker 3** Oh, yeah. Absolutely. As I mentioned, some communities are being relocated as we speak. Some communities, awaiting relocation. And people are moving, especially from, small island states, in the Pacific, because with sea level rise and severe weather events, these countries are becoming uninhabitable. So people have started moving in. Some countries, like Australia recently announced that they will take in climate refugees.

[00:09:10] **Speaker 2** And then we talked in our first interview about people who can't migrate for reasons like poverty and disability. Just talk a bit about that.

[00:09:16] **Speaker 3** Right. So, migration is considered as a form of adaptation, to extreme weather events, to climate change. But there are communities who, unable to move due to poverty or social norms or disability or age. So it's important to pay attention to those populations as well, in addition to looking at people who are moving due to climate change.

[00:09:44] **Speaker 2** And how can we increase the resilience of communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change?

[00:09:50] **Speaker 3** So learn from the past. Although we have never faced such a severe threat to, the global community before. But indigenous communities especially have adapted to, changing climate for, for millennia. So we can learn from their wisdom. And also communities that are close to the ground, like, you know, small scale farmers, they have adapted to changing climates. And also, you know, build more, better infrastructure to withstand these, disasters. And educate people about what we can do, to build our resilience.

[00:10:35] **Speaker 2** And that I know you study like global things, not local, but are there any ways you recommend we increase the resilience of Madison, or any thing you recommend a city does to be prepared for the impacts of climate migration?

[00:10:47] **Speaker 3** Yeah. So again, there are lots of things that we can do as citizens. I said it's a local, I mean, a global problem with local impacts. So there are lots of things that we can do to, you know, make, houses, places where we live, more climate friendly and even that diet, can. Tribute to climate change. So if we can sort of transition to a more plant based diet, reduce food waste and things like that. And I think the most important thing is to educate ourselves about what we can do. The, governor has, task established a task force on climate change in Wisconsin. The mayor, has a program, so we'll get involved in those things. And, yeah, getting educated, I think, is the most important thing.

[00:11:47] **Speaker 2** And then are there any ways you think, like, cities or government should be getting ready, like maybe investing in infrastructure, stuff like that?

[00:11:53] **Speaker 3** Absolutely. I mean, you know, with the recent disaster in Baltimore, with the the collapse of the bridge, people are already talking about the need to increase infrastructure. So we have seen many examples of that around the world. So, the the recent infrastructure bill that was passed, by the Biden administration has a lot of money for this. So we really need to invest in better infrastructure, better, you know, buildings to withstand these disasters of flooding is going to be a problem. Extreme heat is going to be a problem. It's already a problem. So we need to build infrastructure to withstand those, and make it better for people to live in.

[00:12:43] **Speaker 2** And from your personal perspective, do you think Madison has the potential to be a climate haven?

[00:12:48] **Speaker 3** I think so, because, we have not experienced the severe weather events that other, places have experienced, like wildfires and, extreme heat and things like that, or tornadoes. So I think, it has the potential to become a climate haven, and some people might already be, moving as a result of climate impacts from other parts of the country. So, yeah.

[00:13:21] **Speaker 2** And do you have any general advice for climate migrants or like people like even thinking about doing research on where to live?

[00:13:30] **Speaker 3** I think moving is a big decision, and climate change might be one factor that goes into that decision. Affordability is a big thing. Affordable housing is a big, big factor that goes in and, Madison especially is becoming quite expensive, in terms of housing and, you know, cost of living and things like that. Comparatively, it's still better than, you know, California and, the East Coast. So, looking at, you know, and your culture plays a big role too, particularly for people, indigenous people moving, you know, or leaving the, land is a big decision. So looking at all of these factors and weighing them, I think will give people a good, choice, really, but sometimes, you know, you don't have time to make those decisions. Sometimes they have to move pretty fast. And then, of course, you go to the safest possible place, when you're faced with a disaster, especially.

[00:14:48] **Speaker 2** And, besides, like, a lack of affordable housing, are there any reasons you think Madison might not be suitable as a climate haven?

[00:14:55] **Speaker 3** Well, I mean, we have had Abby. Now, winters are pretty harsh, right? So that's something that people think about when we think about Wisconsin. But I think, you know, overall, Wisconsin, especially Madison, you know, it has good schools, very nice university. So I think it has a lot of attraction, to a lot of people. But harsh winters might be a negative, factor for some people.

[00:15:29] **Speaker 2** And then, during my research, I kind of found that people tend to migrate within countries rather than overseas. Yeah, just talk a bit about that.

[00:15:36] **Speaker 3** That's right. Even with climate migration, a lot of people, move internally. It takes a lot of resources for people to move, you know, across borders, and also, you know, visa regulations and, you know, border policies, deter people from, moving across borders. They could get arrested if they go without a visa and things like that. So most of the migration associated with climate change will be internal.

[00:16:15] **Speaker 2** And then can you talk a bit about, like building resilience and creating adaptation plans and then in particular like listening to traditional knowledge when we're thinking about climate resilience.

[00:16:24] **Speaker 3** So many countries have already, come up with their adaptation plans. Some, least developed countries were actually given assistance by the UN to, develop their adaptation plans. Whether, many countries are actually incorporating indigenous knowledge and talking to people, is questionable. But that it's really important if we're, serious about building our resilience and, learning from, past experience, it's very important to listen to those who have that knowledge.

[00:17:05] **Speaker 2** And then you talked about how climate, migration and change are a global problem with local impacts. Can you just expand on that a bit?

[00:17:11] **Speaker 3** So, and I say it's a global problem. I mean, everybody every state is contributing to the problem. Every, country is emitting greenhouse gases and all the gases accumulate in the atmosphere and cause damage several years down the line. But the impacts are very localized. So just because, you know, the US is emitting doesn't mean that the, the, localized populations in Wisconsin will not have the impact. So everybody, as I said, will be impacted by climate change. But those, greenhouse gas emissions will also cause damage thousands and thousands of miles away. The small island states are disproportionately affected as well.

[00:18:07] **Speaker 2** And then what a local impacts look like.

[00:18:10] **Speaker 3** So we are already experiencing, you know, and the winters are very different from what we are used to. Less snow. Right? Less precipitation, more extreme weather. So, the the summers will be. Warmer winters will be warmer as well. We will also experience more flooding, which will also have an impact on farming. You know, things like that. We need some to, warm some of the pests one day, which will also have an impact on, the farming community as well. Yeah.

[00:18:53] **Speaker 2** And then we previously talked about, the impacts of, like, climate migration. So resource scarcity conflicts, negative sentiments against foreigners and dwindling resources. Could you just talk a bit about all those things?

[00:19:04] **Speaker 3** Sure. So, if you, think about, the negative perception of foreigners and migrants, you know, there is a negative connotation in the minds of, the people that these, migrants are coming to take our jobs away, take our resources away. So on the one hand, you have that. On the other hand, resources are getting scarce as a result of climate change. So when more people are, looking or, trying to get the same resources, obviously there will be resource scarcity. And there is some, information out there that resource scarcity could lead to the next wave of conflict, especially lack of water. So, desertification is a big problem in many parts of the world, especially Africa. So that could lead to, you know, crop failures, less water and maybe, conflict as well.

[00:20:16] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And then we talked before about how climate change is a collective action problem and that everyone must work together. Can you just talk a bit about that?

[00:20:23] **Speaker 3** Sure. So because every state, no matter how big or small they are, is contributing to the problem. Every state should work together to address that. Because even if the US cuts down its greenhouse gas emissions and everybody else, continued to do the same, without reducing their emissions, then whatever you as does will not be very effective. So every state must work together. Because it's a collective action problem. To solve the problem as well.

[00:21:01] **Speaker 2** And then if there's like one thing people in Madison can do to try to fight climate change, is there anything in particular you recommend them doing?

[00:21:09] **Speaker 3** One thing, maybe reduce our waste and consumption because, carbon footprint is huge. There are little things we can do, without having a big, sort of drastic change on our lifestyles. Food waste is a big issue. And also our consumption levels. Especially electronics, I think, electronic waste is a big issue. Adding to climate change as well. So think about whether we need, when we go to buy the next sort of, the latest iPhone or the laptop or whatever. Just think whether it's necessary for us right now. And also what happens to the stuff that we no longer use? Where do they go? Right. So educating ourselves and also cutting down our consumption I think would be important.

[00:22:09] **Speaker 2** Thank you. And do you think we'll see an increase in climate migration in the next few years?

[00:22:14] **Speaker 3** I think it's inevitable. There's consequences, become worse. I think, climate migration will increase as a result. I need to be in the millions. If you look at the the global picture.

[00:22:28] **Speaker 2** And then my last question is just there's no terminology or legal framework to govern climate refugees. Can you just talk a bit about that?

[00:22:35] **Speaker 3** Sure. So, if you look at, the legal framework governing refugees right now, it's confined to political refugees. So, there's a very specific, definition of refugees in the Geneva Convention. And you have to establish persecution based on certain factors like your national origin, political opinion, etc.. So climate migration or climate refugees, which is not a legal Tom, will not fall within that definition. So currently, if people are forced to move across borders because of climate change, they will not be covered by the Geneva Convention. So currently there is, a legal, sort of gap when it comes to climate refugees.

[00:23:23] **Speaker 2** And is there anything else you want to talk about or expand on today?

[00:23:27] **Speaker 3** So I think paying attention to the problem, realizing that nobody is going to, escape the consequences of climate change. And also the fact that the decisions we make here, will have repercussions thousands of miles away, like, floods, small island states and people who are living there because they will be the ground zero of climate change, because they might lose everything they have, including their country. So we don't really know where those people will go and what will happen to those countries. So it's important for us to realize that the decisions we take will have, repercussions thousands of miles away.

[00:24:13] **Speaker 2** And then is there any questions you have?

[00:24:15] **Speaker 1** I don't have any actions.

[00:24:16] **Speaker 2** And do you think I should redo the first two? So she's looking at me, or do you think it wasn't that different?

[00:24:24] **Speaker 1** It's probably okay if you want to do the introduction is fine.

[00:24:27] **Speaker 2** Okay. I'll just do you.

[00:24:28] **Speaker 1** Can we do the first full question? Okay.

[00:24:34] **Speaker 2** Can you just tell me a bit about your work in your research and a bit a bit about the wiki working group?

[00:24:40] **Speaker 3** So, I look at the link between, human rights and environmental issues and how a human rights framework would be beneficial for, environmental issues. And, my work in wiki, is, part of the, the working group on climate migration. I, we want to see, why and whether people are moving to Wisconsin because of climate change. There is some anecdotal evidence that people are moving to the Midwest because of climate change, but we don't know for sure. So we want to do a more scientific study of, people who have moved to Wisconsin, especially to see why they moved and why the climate change was a reason.

[00:25:32] **Speaker 2** Thank you. Thank you for doing that.

[00:25:33] **Speaker 1** Okay.

[00:25:34] **Speaker 2** Thank you for answering all those questions.

[00:25:36] **Speaker 3** No problem. Did you go well?

[00:25:40] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I think okay. Yeah. All right. Okay. Whenever you're ready, you can give it a try. No pressure. Okay. And now how about we go back? Just go back to your computer. Okay. And then, just chat for, like, 30s doesn't have to be about anything in particular. So, okay, whenever you're.

[00:31:24] **Speaker 3** Looking at me and say you're going for.

[00:31:26] **Speaker 1** Lunch, right? It's. Ever busier. Yeah.

[00:31:34] **Speaker 4** I've been reading about the plastic surgery.

[00:31:37] **Speaker 1** Okay.

[00:31:38] **Speaker 4** And also reading the treaty itself. So I was wondering, how do plastics end up in the ocean? Or how do so many.

[00:31:47] **Speaker 3** People just adopt them? Yeah. And sometimes the, you know, the ships discharge them to which they're not.

[00:31:54] **Speaker 1** Supposed to do. Yeah. So I go.

[00:31:58] **Speaker 3** In for lunch.

[00:31:58] **Speaker 1** Now. Okay. Yes. Okay. Just talk to each other. Yeah. Okay.

[00:32:06] **Speaker 3** Where are you going?

[00:32:07] **Speaker 1** For lunch.

[00:32:09] **Speaker 4** I've got to go across to the education building.

[00:32:11] **Speaker 1** Oh, okay. Okay. Yeah, that's not too far.

[00:32:15] **Speaker 4** So you know where they are. Exciting.

[00:32:17] **Speaker 1** You know?

[00:32:18] **Speaker 3** Yeah, but they have a good choice, actually.

[00:32:20] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Yeah. That's good. Yeah. So I do my voice. So whenever you're ready, I'm recording. You can just walk down to Hannah. I haven't actually come this way for a long time. Whenever you're ready.

[00:32:37] **Speaker 3** Okay. Going to my.

[00:32:46] **Speaker 1** Office. Okay. And actually I'm sorry. Can we do it one more time. I it was my fault. I messed up. Oh. And would you feel. Sometimes people feel more comfortable if like carrying something. Do you have like a binder or several. Okay. It might help you feel more like natural. That's a good idea. Sometimes it just helps to feel just like, oh, I don't know. You know, people always forget how to walk with you. Yeah. I don't know how long. That's all I need. Yeah. So then, whenever you're ready, come on down. Yeah. Okay. Great.