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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** And then whenever you're ready. Sounds good. Cool. So I'll just start with some questions I have about were. Okay. When you first met him. So when I was talking to him, I remember he said you by the time he got to Dodge County and he realized he was in Wisconsin. He was just, like, so depressed. He didn't even want to leave like his. So. And even when he heard about the law clinic and so he didn't even want to come. But he finally decided to. So when you met him, like, what was your first impression of it?

[00:00:26] **Speaker 2** When I first met him. So when we're in Dodge, I greet people and then place them with students. And I remember asking him after, you know, who was the first person you spoke to? And he was like, yeah, and it was you. And all you did was ask if I spoke English. And I was like, oh, that wasn't super welcoming, I'm sure. But then he immediately went and sat with one of our students, Maggie. And about ten minutes after they were, talking, she came back to me with tears in her eyes and said, Aaron, we have to help him. And, reading his story and talking to him that day, I knew that it was a case that we should be taking, and Maggie was the student who would be working on it.

[00:01:08] **Speaker 1** So what was it about his case that you knew you would be able to help or, like, stood out compared to other cases?

[00:01:13] **Speaker 2** So compared to other cases, there are some cases at Dodge where people have, criminal convictions that maybe make it, tougher to qualify for immigration benefits, or they have, like a border violation or something like that, but we didn't have any of that. And what I would say of what I learned from this case, he had what would be a textbook asylum case. It was one of the strongest asylum cases I've ever seen. And I knew that we should, we would be able. I hoped that we would be able to represent him and, assist him in being, receiving asylum and eventually reuniting with his family as well.

[00:01:50] **Speaker 1** Gotcha. So what are those kind of points for asylum that made it so textbook?

[00:01:54] **Speaker 2** So he was. He fled Cameroon based on, persecution, past persecution because of his political beliefs. And the evidence was strong there, not only as country reports and expert reports that were able to present, but he also wears scars on his body that we were able to, demonstrate were linked to the persecution that he suffered from the government. In Cameroon.

[00:02:22] **Speaker 1** Gotcha. So can you also kind of walk me through, like a typical asylum case? Like, what does that look like? How long does it take? And also kind of how does that compare to you applying for a green card thing?

[00:02:33] **Speaker 2** So there's no way to really for me to articulate a normal asylum case, because over the past, especially since Trump was president, it's changed substantially and it seems to change substantially every few months, including now, with their current policies that have been changing through the power of the executive office. But, when we met him, it we looked at I looked at it as like a normal detained, defensive asylum claim, meaning he's in deportation proceedings and will represent him. And eventually he'll present his case in front of an immigration judge. And if he gets asylum, then he'll be released from detention and will be on a pathway to citizenship. So after one year of being an asylum, you can apply for your green card, and then four years after you can apply to become a U.S. citizen. But when he entered, it was at the, the peak of the most restrictive asylum policies implemented by President Trump, including us, safe third country transit ban, which means if you pass through a third country on the way to the United States and didn't apply for asylum in one of those countries, and then you try to apply for asylum at the southern border, you're barred from receiving asylum. And that's what he was facing. Even though any other time I would have met him, I would have said, we're going to go, you know, to your, hearing in three months after we prepared everything and you're going to get you're going to get asylum. I'm I'm confident you are. I would never say 100%, but because of the policies under the Trump administration, they barred him from having asylum. So we had to change strategies. And the first thing we wanted to do was to get him out of detention. And that's almost impossible for people that are considered, under the arriving aliens. They are, people who present themselves at the southern border to seek asylum. They're subject to mandatory detention. So I was subject to mandatory detention. But because of his, good character and his family ties in the US, he had a cousin here. Ice. Immigration Customs Enforcement actually agreed to parole him into the United States, which shocked us. But then, allowed him to not have to remain in detention during the pendency of his. Case. And so normally when someone's in detention, we're going to have their final asylum hearing 4 to 5 months after they are detained there. Once someone is released from detention and they are planning for asylum but not detained, it can take years. And that's what it did in Glas case. The only reason he has asylum now is we requested for an expedited hearing. Otherwise, he probably would have still been waiting, 5 or 6 years later.

[00:05:29] **Speaker 1** Wow. Yeah. So. Yeah. So. So I remember talking to him as well, and he was saying how he didn't even know he was in Wisconsin until months after, because he said the most confusing part of his whole journey here was honestly getting to the U.S. border and getting traveling from there to Wisconsin. How often does that happen with people?

[00:05:53] **Speaker 2** It's it's super common. People that are detained at the Dodge County Correctional Facility here in Wisconsin are from all over the world. Many of them are from Wisconsin and surrounding states. Illinois doesn't have any detention centers anymore. So there are people from many other states who have been living in other states, but also when, we are bringing people from the southern border to be detained, they can be from all over the world. We meet people from Afghanistan, from China, from Cameroon, from Cote d'Ivoire, from, Venezuela, really all over the world. And they have no idea why they're in Dodge County or Wisconsin. And really where that is. I mean, we're closer to Canada than we are to Mexico, so it can be really disorienting to them.

[00:06:43] **Speaker 1** Totally. So since you've been a lawyer, how have you seen immigration policies? People come through. How has that changed over the past five years? Past ten years?

[00:06:52] **Speaker 2** Over the past five years become much more restrictive, and all of the policies have become more complicated, especially as they relate to asylum. When Trump became president, it felt like there was very little I could do to represent someone to qualify for asylum. And meeting during that time was almost paralyzing, because I knew that our laws and our international, agreements. Should allow him to have safety within the United States and to eventually be reunited with his family. But as it stood the day that I met him, that was impossible.

[00:07:38] **Speaker 1** So going along with the policies, what is your reaction to the Biden executive order that temporary temporarily shuts off access along the border, especially for asylum seekers?

[00:07:49] **Speaker 2** I am not surprised that there is a more restrictive policy that is coming across, even from Biden's office, because it has become so politicized and there's so much misunderstanding about the border. You know, all we do is here in, in emergency. And, but we're really forgetting about that. This is a humanitarian issue. And that as United States, we have laws that allow people to seek protection here when they will be persecuted or have been persecuted in their home country. And now we're just blocking that off again. For many people, that will be, would otherwise be eligible for protections in the US. But as a political the political nature of immigration right now is. I think this is by restricting things at the borders. The only way someone is going to gain popularity with the general population, even though that's incredibly disheartening.

[00:08:49] **Speaker 1** Yeah, totally. And so oftentimes these, immigrants return back to their home countries where it could be unsafe. What does that mean for someone like, who could have this potentially could have been him if it had been a few years earlier.

[00:09:02] **Speaker 2** Right. Well, I mean, when Goya entered the United States, he entered in a very it was an emergent situation. He had just been. Survived an attempted kidnaping, and prior to that, he was. He was stuck in Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols, so he would have had to remain in Matamoras, Mexico, which is one of the most dangerous cities in the world. And he would have had to remain there for a long time. But after he was, beaten and almost kidnaped, he begged a custom border protection officer to allow him to enter the United States and be detained there during the asylum process versus staying in Mexico, where he knew his life was very much in danger. And we believe and I've talked about this, that the only reason they did eventually let him in beyond that, he, you know, had physical wounds and, his health was in danger. He spoke English well, and so he was able to communicate fully with the Customs Border Protection office. He's an articulate, he's intelligent, he's kind. I think all of those his ways of communicating really allowed him to, not remain in Mexico during the pendency of his asylum hearing. But if I think about. Him being returned. To Mexico at a day like today. I'm not sure he would have survived. There is so much danger to, migrants in these border cities because they are targets. Many of them, you know, they may travel with some money, but it's not much money. But the the gangs and the narco traffickers, they are controlling many of those areas, and they know how to target individuals who are extremely vulnerable on their journey to seek safety in the U.S. and beyond that. There's a lot of, what I've witnessed in what has been reported. There's a lot of racism also in Mexico for migrants from African countries, in particular those, who look like LA. And so he experienced a lot of that on his journey as well. And I think at first he thought it was because he didn't speak Spanish. And later he realized it was because of the color of his skin. So the danger that he would face if he was forced to remain in Mexico during this time, or if he had been returned to Cameroon, he would not have survived.

[00:11:37] **Speaker 1** Yeah, yeah. So what does that mean for people who are now unable to cross the border, who are at the border right now, what does it look like for them? One of the implications of this.

[00:11:46] **Speaker 2** So right now the Biden administration is attempting to, have everyone process for asylum through an app, a CBP one app. And, so when I go to the border, I meet with people who are in the process of waiting for an appointment to then go and ask the U.S. if they can apply for asylum within the U.S. people are waiting for months, to to just get an appointment with CBP. One, in order to process. And so they're living, in Taiwan. I visited shelters where people are leaving. But you're living, but you also see people just living in tent cities. They're waiting there with some hope that they one day will be able to enter the U.S.. But those that are waiting for the CBP one app are waiting a long time. And those that are crossing irregularly without a CBP one app are, often targeted by criminal organizations or being, you know, smuggled and paying people exorbitant amounts of money in order to attempt to cross the U.S. so the dangers and the desperation are evident everywhere you look and with everyone you meet. And while increasing options for more regular migration, I do think is a solution, it's not happening enough. There are not enough safe routes for people to seek protection.

[00:13:14] **Speaker 1** Yeah, so how dangerous are those routes? Because people will still try to cross regardless, right? So what happens to them?

[00:13:20] **Speaker 2** The death rate at the border right now is incredibly high. People face, you know, the elements, but also criminals. You know, there's so much danger that people face, but people are desperate. And so in order, they're risking their lives because they have no other choice.

[00:13:39] **Speaker 1** Yeah, yeah. Right. I think that's kind of all the questions I have. Is there anything else you want to talk about? I mean, I guess when you you go to these countries, like, what's your goal when you're making these people, your clients help them?

[00:13:54] **Speaker 2** So we have a new project. It's called Safe Passage from the Darien Gap. And the focus of the project is to look at ways to mitigate the dangers that people face when they are, coming from south of the Darien Gap. So in Colombia it is similar journey that and this is he was actually one of the inspirations for this because of everything he suffered during his journey. And also, I've met a number of people that he was on the journey with and they talk about how he saved their lives. You know, he's a strong, compassionate, strong leader. And so learning about that. But but then learning about all the hardships that he went through in the discrimination and. That he that people even survive the journey is incredible. But we're looking at ways to of harm reduction. How can we reduce harm to people like while who have these strong asylum cases, in order to see if there's a way that they can get to the US with asylum in a regular route without having to risk their lives, in order to get to the southern border, because there's really no other options. And so in, in a few countries right now, including Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, there are these safe, secure mobile security on mobile offices. So safe mobility offices. And so Biden has opened up these regular routes of migration so people can apply with, the United Nations or with, the IOM. So International Office of Migration to receive benefits while they're in Colombia, and then they can fly to the U.S.. So if Y had been, afforded the opportunity to apply for asylum in Colombia with the United Nations, then he wouldn't have had to risk all of it, and then he would have arrived in the U.S without needing a court date, because he already would have been, deemed a refugee. And so Biden is starting to do some of these, opening these regular migration routes that increase safety. And also encourage people with strong asylum claims to apply for asylum earlier or refugee status earlier. So we're really looking at that and hoping that. There's ways that we can increase these, opportunities for people to seek have a safe passage to the US. The problem is it's very limited. And who can apply? And how many people, are able to process? But it's a start. And so we're really looking at those those factors and seeing. What other ways we can mitigate the danger that people are facing. And one of that is also information campaigns, so that people actually know before they risk their lives, whether they can be whether they may be eligible for asylum in the U.S., because a lot of people who are coming, they don't necessarily know what the law is. Why did he studied before you came? He knew what you as asylum. He knew that he would should qualify for protection, that many people are coming get misinformation, whether it's from their governments or from criminal organizations that benefit from the money that people pay to take this dangerous journey. So trusted information is really important, and we're hoping to be part of that. Those information campaigns that will allow people to have trusted information before they choose to risk their life.

[00:17:30] **Speaker 1** Yeah. It's really that was going to be my next question, like, how do you get that information out to people either just through word of mouth? And how does that add to the confusion? Right.

[00:17:40] **Speaker 2** So one thing we're starting to do is, we're collaborating with law schools in Mexico and Colombia to do transnational immigration clinics. So when we were in Colombia in February, I brought five of my students, and then we worked with immigration clinic at Universidad de Los Andes, which is a really amazing law school, highly reputable. And what we did is we went out to the community and met with people who had questions about both Colombian Colombian protections. And U.S. protections because Colombia before five. About five years ago, didn't really have, people that were wanting to stay there. But with Venezuela, it all changed. And so there are options for asylum in Colombia. There are options for temporary status for certain people in Colombia. And so for some people who aren't going to qualify for asylum in the US, they it may be better for them to stay in Colombia, but doing these transnational clinics, they are able to meet with a U.S. attorney who can, advise on the U.S. law as well as a Colombian attorney so that they can have agency in their choice and say, okay, doesn't sound like my case would allow me to qualify for asylum. So maybe I'll look at staying in Colombia or I have a very strong case for asylum in Colombia. How are asylum in the U.S.? How am I going to how am I going to process that? And do I want to risk my life to go through the Darien Gap and, to reach the southern border? But just sharing trusted information, providing, ability for people to have agency in their decisions?

[00:19:21] **Speaker 1** Yeah, absolutely. I think that's pretty much all anything else you want to talk about with.

[00:19:27] **Speaker 2** Or. I don't think so now. Okay.

[00:19:29] **Speaker 1** Yeah.

[00:19:30] **Speaker 2** But thank you.

[00:19:31] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Thank you.