**The Hum Podcast**

**Episode 25: "You May Not Know They're A Slave"**

*[Theme music fades in]*

Julie: It starts out from need. It starts out from need to eat, to put clothes on your back. Sometimes because the crop you're making doesn't sell for enough. So if you're selling your cocoa for ridiculous prices, you'll never be able to get out of that poverty trap.

*[Music increases in volume]*

Speaker: You're listening to The Hum.

*[Music decreases in volume]*

Gilad: Do you drink coffee or tea? Do you enjoy chocolate or bananas? What if we told you the people who grow those products very often don't earn enough money for the basic necessities of life like food, water, and health care, or that the environment suffered as a result of their production, or that child labor was used? Would they still taste as good? We're proud to say that today's episode is co-presented with the good people at Fairtrade. Fairtrade is a movement for change that works directly with businesses, consumers, and campaigners to make trade fair for farmers and for workers. Fairtrade means a fair price is paid to producers, allowing them to live life with dignity. It means that the environment is protected and that gender discrimination and child labor are prohibited. Social projects such as clean water, medical care, and education benefit entire communities in the Global South. Feed empowerment and learn more at fairtrade.ca.

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Gilad: Joined here today by Julie Francoeur, executive director of Fairtrade Canada. Fairtrade is a movement for change that works directly with businesses, consumers, and campaigners to make trade fair for farmers and workers. The international fair trade system represents the world's largest and most recognized Fairtrade system. It's about better prices, decent working conditions, and fair terms of trade for the farmers and workers who grow the coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, bananas, and many other products that we, as consumers, consume every day. So, Sim and I were talking about modern day slavery, and we had absolutely no idea to the degree of what's still going on. Sim, maybe you can share.

Simona: Yeah, so some stats that we've pulled from the International Labor Organization tells us that modern day slavery affects over 40.3 million people around the world. Many of them producing goods ultimately destined for Canadian supply chains. One in four of the victims of child slavery are children.

Gilad: Which is bonkers, because if you actually think about it, if you take the entire population of Canada and say like throw in a Kentucky or a Louisiana, that would equal the number of slaves in the world. We did the math.

Simona: It took us so long to do the math.

Gilad: It took about two hours to figure out how to do this. But we basically figured out that that basically works out to one in every 190 people across the world. It's terrifying. We had no idea it was this degree. So when we talk about modern day slavery, what kind of forms does this take and what is a modern day slave?

Julie: So there's no legal definition yet, or no legal definition that's universally agreed on what modern slavery is. It's a phrase that is used to encompass different types of conditions that are put on a human being that isn't free. There's things like bonded labor, so that would be someone who works more the traditional idea that we have of slavery, so someone who works without their own accord or their own willingness to do so. Sometimes there's debt bondage too, so it might be you owe someone money and you work off that debt. Sometimes a farmer that's a neighbor to you wants you to work on his farm to pay off a debt that you or someone else in your family contracted with his family over time, and you work a long time to pay it off. That's one form. Forced marriage is considered also modern slavery. Anyone married not on their own accord. Trafficked, so human trafficking would be one. What we call descent slavery, so if you were born from a slave and then owners of your parents consider you also their slave or their property. And child labor, and especially the worst forms of child labor, would be all considered under this kind of bucket naming of modern slavery.

Gilad: One in four modern day slaves are children, which blew us away. You were talking about forced marriage. We have the stat in front of us so we will regurgitate it, but 15.4 million people across the world are thrown into forced marriage. We as Canadians are guilty in some ways of propagating this. When we came up with the name of our podcast, The Hum, I don't know if we've ever shared it, like why it's called The Hum. But really, it's supposed to be a metaphor for the fact that there's human rights abuses all around us. Even in complete silence, there's always a hum in the background. There is human rights abuses from the clothes we wear to the people that we're sharing the bus with or walking around with. When we talk about risky products that we as Canadians

are consuming, what are we talking about? What kinds of foods, clothing, what exactly is that? And who are we talking about?

Julie: The risks in Canada are on multiple different things. The highest amount of risks are around agricultural goods. So, food. You're talking mostly cocoa, sugar, cotton also. So, not food, but something we wear every day. Then you're talking electronics: cell phones, computers, any electronic equipment. Mostly ... Not necessarily but for the last assembly point, a lot of time for the minerals that are included in it. But also cosmetics. Certain minerals that are used in cosmetics and how their fabricked. And clothing is definitely a big one. Not just cotton, but the clothing manufacturing. You were talking earlier about stats in total in the world. We estimate that even in Canada, we talk about about 17,000 people who would be modern day slavery here in Canada. Those would be mostly human trafficked individuals or sex exploitation, so people who are in sex work not willingly, or people who have been forced into forced marriage at an early age. Forced marriage can start from anything advert, so marrying off your daughter - it's typically daughters in this case - but it can also be later on or without ... and even as adults, sometimes women might be married off. Not just as young kids, but as adults as well.

Gilad: Let's call some people out. Are we comfortable calling people out? Are there people that are worse? Who are repeat offenders? Who are the worst of the worst here?

Julie: There's definitely regions of the world that I would say have not as good legal systems or laws that are just lacking and extremely weak. In other countries who have decent laws, but just don't enforce them. So, have proper legislation around human rights, but don't have the capacity to enforce or even a financial capacity to carry out enforcement. Southeast Asia is where we see the most. We estimate about two thirds of modern day slavery cases are in Southeast Asia. So you're talking all the clothing industry, fishing industry, shrimp industry, and multiple other crops too. But also, Ivory Coast and Ghana for cocoa with a lot of child laborers and a lot of other types of [inaudible] labor. So it crops up in different countries and legislation.

Julie: In terms of companies, if it's certain companies or certain industries, the longer the supply chains are ... The further between what we eat or buy and what the original component of that is, the more opaque it becomes. So if you're eating a banana, it was the same shape and form on a banana farm. Doesn't mean there's no human rights exploitations in bananas, but at least as a banana company, you kind of know where it came from. It's not that far behind. If you're making laptops, there's thousands of components in there. For you to know where on the planet all of this came from, it makes it a much harder job for you as a company to start understanding that. Same for clothing. The distance between

the fancy shirt and the cotton field is tremendous. The more complex that chain is, the more those industries are sometimes ignoring the problem or just finding it too hard to even start sometimes.

Simona: I want to go back to a point that you made about different mechanisms of enslavement and forced marriage and sex exploitation being one of them. The statistic on how many women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labor accounts for 99% of the victims of sexploitation and forced marriage, and 58% in other sectors. So, nearly half of people in other mechanisms of enslavement are women. I want to know, why in 2018 is the practice of modern day slavery and forced labor still happening? You kind of talked about a few of the kind of mechanisms, but how does someone, let's say a young child in Ghana, kind of find themselves in the practice of enslavement?

Julie: What we see, or at least our experience tells us, we don't have as much experience in some of the minerals part, so those are realities that I can't speak to as much. But in a lot of the agricultural sector or cotton or clothing, what we see is it's all related to price. A lot of time, or at least that's one of the components. Poverty is a big driver of that. If you, as a parent, so think of yourself as a parent for a minute. If you don't make enough money to eat and feed your kids, then you might need to ask your 12 year old to go to work. You might need to sign a contract in labor to have your 11 year old work for a semester and not be in school, hoping that maybe he'll get back to school next year. So it never starts ... It's quite rare that it just starts off from real evil spirited people. It starts out from need, and it starts from this need to eat, to put clothes on your back. Sometimes because the crop you're making doesn't sell for enough. So if you're selling your cocoa for ridiculous prices, you'll never be able to get out of that poverty trap.

Julie: By working on setting higher prices in the supply chain, that helps in at least knowing that, okay, I have a buffer. We can actually send our kids to school. We can pay for school supplies. We can pay for food for tonight so that I don't have to think of having to take the kids out of school. But it's really rare that it starts from other things too. It also starts from ... Certain things are very cultural though. Like I would say bonded marriage, for example, or forced marriage have links in poverty, but also have links in cultural beliefs, religious beliefs, political systems that are much more difficult to untangle. But it can make reality is definitely one where we can also play a role a lot more, because it's based in what we pay for certain goods as final consumers, but at the companies that also buy those goods.

Gilad: Has the practice of slavery evolved over the years? Has it gotten trickier to find? Has it gotten more intricate in how it works? How has it evolved, if it has?

Julie: When I talk about slavery, people have this image of slavery movies they've seen, right? Or they're seeing like any stat and they think of a boat and people with chains, and that's definitely what it comes to mind as as a term. We've moved quite in a different direction from those days, obviously. The main one, thankfully, is that it's illegal. In most places, all of this is illegal, so it's not calling it out and just hoping it gets solved. It should be solved because there's legal frameworks on it. But it also means that it's much harder to see. It doesn't look like a slave most times. You might see them on a bus and not know it's a slave in that sense, because it's based on the reality of that person. So the person wouldn't be typically tied to ... Some might be in certain situations, but the bulk of them look like they might be free to leave. But if their papers are withheld so they can't move because they don't have their IDs with them or their IDs are being withheld by their boss or by their spouse or by someone who they work for, for example. Or just having been in a situation where psychologically, you're trapped in that the space. I guess in Canada, we're a bit more familiar. We've heard stories or we've seen documentaries about people who are victims of sex trafficking, for example, in Canada. These girls don't walk around in chains, but their ability to leave that system is really diminished anyway. But it's also really hard for ... If you're a social worker, if you're a law enforcement to know which girl is it and is it this one or not, unless you really sit down and understand the stories.

Simona: We understand that organizations can put effort and need to put effort into dismantling the practices that allow and create pathways for the enslavement of peoples. That's more people with the dedicated job of ensuring that the supply chain is clean. But what can we as people, as the individual consumer, as an everyday Canadian do to actually contribute to the dismantling of these systems?

Julie: One of them is to care, first, and to kind of educate ourselves on what that means. Especially where there's more risks. Even if it's things like clothing, like looking at the tags of where the stuff comes from. I don't know if you've heard of the campaign from Fashion Revolution, "Who Made My Clothes?" It was like a whole hashtag campaign a couple of years ago. That made companies start to pay notice. It was people basically shopping and taking a picture of their clothes, tagging the company they were buying it from, and saying "#who made my clothes?" I want to know where does this come from? Who actually made it through supply chain? So, campaigns like this or just notices ... Even I would say like people asking questions when they go shopping to people. The clerk might not know or the person selling you stuff might not know. But at some point if it's asked enough, they have to filter it back and be like, "Hey, everyone's asking us about X or this."

Julie: We've seen it with Apple, for example, where there's campaigns of people going into the Apple shops and asking questions about their iPhones or their watches or what not. Then the staff at some point having to say like, "Okay, we need to be more responsive and actually know ourselves, not just the technicalities of these products, but what's behind it and where they are made and so we can answer those questions." But those small things that we think are tiny are actually not tiny. A lot of times, we'll talk to companies on their supply chain or responsibilities and those who really don't care or do nothing will either tell us, "I don't have to do this. Like it's not legally required, so if I don't have to, why would I? It's more money, it's more expensive, it's less money for my shareholders." Or they'll say, "My consumers don't care." And that part ... They respond to their consumers. If it's just one person once in a while that asks something, that might not matter. But if it's constant enough, even if it's not the majority of their consumers, they'll start changing. We've seen it for more companies are offering organic, for example, and offering cage free eggs or what not. All of those things are because of consumer interest and Canadians taking notice and starting to ask questions.

Gilad: I guess it also starts with asking questions of ourselves-

Julie: Yes.

Gilad: It's so intertwined in everything we're doing. It's in our phones, it's in the clothes we wear. You just mentioned the eggs we're eating. It's all over the place. I think we also need to take a step back and ask ourselves, where are we buying all these things from?

Julie: There's a pretty cool website on global slavery where you can go and kind of tells you how many slaves work for you. I don't know if you've ever done that. It's very sobering.

Gilad: Oh my gosh, my guilt ... The guilt I live with regardless every day is astronomical.

Julie: What's interesting though, is it goes with you through like what do you own? Do you own a car? Do you own a bike? How many bras do you have? Very ... It goes through everything in your house basically. Depending on what you answer, it'll tell you, "Okay, currently this year, 23.2 slaves have worked for you." Then you go and you're like, "What if I had less bras and what if I drove my car?" Kind of understanding, especially also where the bigger parts of modern slavery happened. You're like, "Okay, so it's really in those types of products or it's really in those," and understanding the impact. But it's hard to then, after I'd say, "It's not on me," to slowly change it.

Gilad: What do we say to the person who's feeling overwhelmed by all this? If you're actually going on that website and you find out you have, I don't know what the number is, 50 slaves working for you, it seems daunting. It seems like there's nothing you can do. What do you say to that person who's just overwhelmed by this?

Julie: Oh, I would say first it's, it's okay to be overwhelmed. It's definitely an overwhelming phenomenon. But the next step after you kind of overcome that is, okay, well, what's the first step? What's the first one thing I can do? You obviously can't fix all of that. That's also the work that we do with companies because I think it's unfair to say it's up to the individual. I can't fix the world and everything I buy or fix the train system because I take a train. It's not on me. It's on the companies and it's on the governments themselves to fix this. I think what we can show as consumers is say that we care, either by buying the companies that seem to be doing better and just celebrating that, or ... It's not so much about, I've never been a big fan of boycotting. It's more about telling the companies what you want them to do. So even someone is like, "Well, this is my favorite brand of pens or cafe or whatever." Well, tell them that you care about this issue or ask them those questions. Say like, "I still want to be buying from you. Your pants are great. But where are they made, and what's been happening in the supply chain? I care." I think it's the first step.

Simona: How do you respond to people who say that, well, fair trade and organic is always the more expensive choice and that I just don't have the financial means to contribute in that way? Is that always the case? Is it always the more expensive choice, or are there other ways that people can engage?

Julie: I'd say for the majority of fair trade products now in the Canadian market, it's no longer the case for equivalent of quality. If you look at coffee, for example, for an equivalent quality of coffee, by now you have a fair trade organic option as well. So it's really about choice, because there's enough companies out there and it's also a lot of time about cutting the amount of middlemen in fair trade. It's making sure that more money comes into pockets of farmers and workers. If we don't want that to be at the expense of the final consumer paying a lot more, it's how many middlemen in the chain that were actually not really adding any value. We're just buying and reselling. By making the chain more direct, then there's more money in the pockets there and similar costs.

Julie: Now in some supply chains, it's true that it's wildly more expensive. Bananas is an example. Bananas are really, really cheap. It's one of the cheapest fruits, even though it's clearly not farmed in this beautiful Canadian winter. They're cheaper than apples that we farm here. Part of that is because of worker exploitation in the south. It's extremely cheap labor, and not just cheap because it's cheap to live there, but cheap because you don't pay them enough to live properly. So

yeah, fair trade bananas right now in the market are about almost double the price. Now, at the end of the day, in your pockets if you buy bananas, it's probably just a 20 cents difference. Those cents are not a big part of our own income but can make a huge difference on the other side.

Julie: But responsible consumption is also about buying less. When you look at how you can be responsible in what you buy, if you just buy less stuff but think more about what it is that you're buying, and buying either better quality or more ethically made, whether it's fair trade, organic, or recycled, or what not. So I think those two can go in conjunction with that. It used to be 20 years ago that even fair trade coffee was really expensive and you had to really get up early to try and find it in town. Now it's available everywhere, and there's anywhere from like really affordable fair trade coffee to premium, nicer blends. But yeah, it's evolved.

Gilad: So this act of buying responsibly ... I want to go back to the piece on child labor. I kind of want you to just to connect the dots for us. How does buying responsibly support the rehabilitation of victims of child labor and enslavement? Who are the organizations out there that are helping to support people once they are freed?

Julie: There's multiple ones. There's some that are more local, so they might not be as known. But other organizations like Save the Children that we've partnered with a lot do a lot of that work. For example, when we do audit, so Fairtrade is a certification system too. We audit the co-ops of farmers. I'll tell you an example from Belize recently in sugar cane industries. We found over the last five years, multiple cases every year during audits, we'd find one case and it looked isolated, and another case next year, and it kind of still looked isolated. But you kind of fix those ... And then it started to emerge that this was more endemic than just one small and isolated case. When you find those cases, obviously the solution is not to say to that kid, "Just leave this place and go wherever. This is fixed, there's no longer child labor here." It's clearly to work with the community and with this kid and to understand what's the dynamic behind it and why did this child end up there. Is the family there? There's a family around and how can we prevent that kid not ending in a worse situation? Because sometimes that's what happens. To do good, you remove a child or a vulnerable adult from a situation and then they end up, "Okay, well if I don't have that job, then maybe the only next thing is to work in the drug trade or in something even more dangerous for myself." So it's also how to make sure that maybe that this situation now is actually safer than the alternative until we find a solution. So how do you work with them and protect that situation?

Julie: Once that particular case is fixed or is taken care of, it's looking at the community. It's like, okay, so that case is fine. We've solved it in a sense. But it

means that the risk is there. So how do we work on preventing it from happening again? That's where you really talk with the entire community. We look for partners like Save the Children. In the case of Belize, we also work with the local government because a lot of it is their own responsibility to provide classrooms and proper social work services. But then it's working with the children themselves, so we work in the community to say like, "Okay, where do you feel safe in your village? Where do you feel you can go? Where do you feel like, okay, this is a part where I don't feel safe in my village, and why?" Let the adults see that too. A lot of times, it's also having those voices from more vulnerable individuals come out and then you understand like, "Oh okay, this is how maybe as a community we can start to work on this." But it takes time. Also over time, NGOs and organizations that have really developed a professional approach to this, to really understanding the dynamics and your cultural sensitivities of that. 'Cause the idea is also to not make that child or that family become the pariah of the town because, "Whoa, you did that and you've put us on the spot." So it's how do you actually embrace it as something respectful to solve?

Simona: I think one of the most shocking things that I always hear, that there are still people who believe that ... Who may not agree with the idea of boycotts and divestments, not because they don't think that they're impactful practices, but the response is, "Well, what if this is the only way that people can feed their families? What if this is the only way that people can build schools, is because they have this income generated from enslavement?" Or on the kind of flip side is that as an individual consumer, we can't do anything. It is up to governments to lead with better labor and economic reforms so countries can't make it easier for people to set up these types of processes. What they're not advocating for is the abolishment of it. But they don't think that abolishment is the answer that you need. It's more political versus kind of practice.

Julie: Yeah, it's a mix of all of that. I would say for that first part of ... I hear it sometimes. People will say, "Yeah, but at least it's a job, you know? And otherwise they would be maybe dying of hunger." My gut feeling ... I have two answers. There's kind of my gut feeling answer, that's always like, that's bullshit. If we had always functioned like this on everything, on human rights, we would be nowhere. I'd still be cooking meals for a husband at home. Do you know what I mean? Because, "Well at least I have something to do, and at least I'm happy." If you always treat human rights as, well at least it's better than the worst situation, then you never advance. You just say, "Well, at least he's not dead." So that's just to me, like there's no way you can advance with that kind of vision.

Julie: The other part too is in terms of legislation or how do you abolish something, it needs to be everything in conjunction. So, there's the role of government. It's the same ... Like, killing is illegal, but you don't just need the law to be there and the enforcement to arrest someone if they murdered another person. You also

would need to work on prevention and peaceful relationships between neighborhoods. It's a similar approach for modern slavery. You need to work on the underlying issues, which sometimes they're economic or religious or cultural like we spoke about earlier, but then it's enforcement.

Julie: If you look at India or Bangladesh. Let's look at India for a second. I's a billion people with limited state resources. Just in one state, they had over 6,000 different garment factories. So just even if you had ... Imagine some sort of a labor inspector that had to go out every week. That's a massive cost for a state in a very impoverished nation to carry that. Think of countries that are even poorer than India. The cost of trying to fix it just from the enforcement alone ... It needs to come from also the companies who buy from those parts. Companies respond to their shareholders, who that might be us, that might be our parents, that might be whoever. They're responding to their consumers, like people who buy their stuff. So it's a mix of ... I think we all have a role to play, and as individuals also there's the role that we can play as what we buy. There's also what we do in our jobs. You might be working in an office and you're responsible for buying the coffee for your office. There's different parts, or you might work in public service and you will be doing procurement of buying the uniforms or ... So there's also the different parts where we interact from whatever we do in our life.

Gilad: I'm curious. I have a couple more questions. The first is your work. Tell us more about what you're doing at work and what Fairtrade is doing and what you specifically do at work when it comes to forced labor and modern day slaves.

Julie: In Fairtrade Canada, we are part of the fair trade international system. Our job specifically in Canada is to advocate for fair terms of trade. So we advocate the Canadian government, for example, on trade issues. Educating Canadian consumers or Canadian citizens in general about what to eat and buy, and sustainable consumption. We work with Canadian companies on their supply chain and to be able to offer a fair trade certified goods, whether it's agricultural, or clothing, or even shoes now. Then with our counterparts or our teams underground, then we work on the certification of the entire supply chain. Here in Canada, we have a team that will also certify companies when they import things. We'll go and audit them and see contracts that they've signed, how much they're actually paid, have they paid on time, have they paid it all, and to really look in their warehouses. Where is this stuff and where did it come from? Does it match what the producers declared to us? It's a whole transparency and traceability of the supply chains, which is a big part of what we do.

Julie: Now, in my day to day, we're a small office. We're a team of 13 people in Ottawa, and we cover a large country. So it's a lot of different things. The advocacy work, for example, that we do is basically me and another staff that started to develop this. Then we work with the Fairtrade Foundation, which is

our UK counterpart. They're the same as us, but in the UK, and they have a much bigger policy team for example. We work and connect with other teams and colleagues. On modern slavery itself, when, for example, here in Canada we work with over 200 companies. In their supply chains, a lot of them want to understand or work with us to map their risks of human rights, but also environmental compliance or traceability or price transparency. They want to know what happens in the full supply chain.

Julie: When cases of modern slavery or human rights abuses are found in their supply chain, then the first part is how do we inform them and how do we work within a supply chain to understand, "Okay, so this has happened in your supply chain. We found those cases." We'll share or not share, depending on how we can protect the people who've been affected. We wouldn't share if it might put their protection at risk. But then it's also educating Canadian companies as to what that means. Because a lot of time their first reaction is this, like, "Let's run away from that provider. I don't want to source anymore from this farm or I don't want to source anymore from this factory. It's a risk for me, or it's a liability." We actually take it on the reverse to say, "Actually no, partner with them." Because if you leave and you're a responsible company, then that's worse 'cause they're going to have to sell to another company that might not even care. So their own efforts in changing might be completely stopped. We actually want to partner with them and say like, "These cases will happen 'cause you source from ..." If you're going to source cocoa from West Africa, the risks are there of whether it's deforestation or child labor. Be open about it and have those discussions with your providers and be willing to be part of the solution as opposed to run away from it the second it gets messy. That's a big part of what we do.

Gilad: Thanks for sharing that and I'm curious, this is not easy work. It's not easy work to have to listen to these stories, to have to subject yourself as a human to these stories. We were talking earlier before the interview. We do our Human Rights Film Festival every year from September to October, November. We need to go through 300 human rights documentaries. We need to watch all of them through excruciating detail, review them. It takes a toll on me. I know Simona, for your self care, you make a visit to the Mandarin. You spend a couple hours at the buffet.

Simona: Yeah. I like to spend 22.99, get a Diet Coke with ice.

Gilad: For me, it's hard. I'm still ... I've been doing this for a number of years, and I still don't know what the balance is. I find that at this time of the year, I go to the cinema to watch just stupid movies like Jurassic World or maybe Bohemian Rhapsody isn't stupid. I thought it was stupid. But, for me it's that. It's like unplugging my brain. I'm curious to know what do you do for your self care? How do you stay balanced while working on such difficult things?

Julie: I have a five year old, so we'll do like crazy dance in the evening and kind of not think about anything. That helps, connecting with a human who isn't aware of those problems yet. In the office, we'll have this, sometimes these ... You have to balance those really heavy topics with just really lighthearted humor and kind of not take it too seriously at times because it's ... Or you take what we do very seriously, but you can't take yourself very seriously, if that's a way to put it. Yeah, there's definitely moments, especially with our teams on the ground or producers that we work with, where you know the reality and how they sell their crops on really, really low prices, especially when it can get really cynical too. So it's not just so much seeing the human rights abuses, but it's also the cynicism sometimes within the industry. Or talking with certain companies or hearing in the larger industry, discussions on sustainability, for example, in crops. And all they talk about is, "Well, they just need to be more productive and produce more on their farm," but never talk about paying them more fairly. Obviously, if you're not paid fairly, then how will you pay your worker fairly or your ... It's a ripple effect. That cynicism, I think, is the hardest one. When you do that work to not become a completely ...

Gilad: Hardened cynic.

Julie: Yeah, cynical yourself I guess. Or still be sensitive and still be taking it in and curious and not be jaded by this.

Gilad: I always say if you're involved in this line of work and you're cynical, then you're just sadistic. If you don't believe that something will get better, then you're just sadistic.

Julie: Yeah. Yeah. A friend of mine always calls me the idealist. I'm like, you have to be. You have to be something that ... I have deep belief that it can work. And I also see tons of companies doing amazing work way beyond what is legally required or even what would be best practices. To see that and see them thrive as businesses too and prove that not only can actually work, but it can even make money, you can do good like this, keeps me motivated. When I go back to communities where I've been, let's say 10 years ago, and seeing it now because they've applied certain things or they've partnered with commercial partners abroad that have really supported them over the years, and just see how much they can develop ... It kind of gives you energy to go and continue, that it actually can get better. So that's part of the work, yeah.

Simona: Is there ever ... I remember the Rainer Road fire in Bangladesh. It was a huge garment-

Julie: The Rana Plaza?

Simona: Yeah, at the Rana Plaza, and it was a huge fire in this garment industry. Hundreds of people died and it was one instance where the world was watching. Everybody around the world was hearing the horrific stories of people who had been lost in the rubble. Hundreds and hundreds of people died. When further you looked at who had actually been producing garments in those factories, it was H&M, it was Joe Fresh. Things that people ... Brands that people buy every day. In your line of work, do you ever think with something like this horrific tragedy, that this could be the turning point? Governments are watching, people are more aware? Or do you ever kind of get upset or angry where there's all this kind of energy around this and then it dies out and it dissipates, and then people still go back to buying reasonably priced cardigans and non well fitting jeans?

Julie: I'd say yeah, there's moments where it can go back for sure. But yeah, the Rana Plaza I would say really woke up the garment industry. Many people were doing good work before. It's not that it started sustainability at all. But many big brands are also choosing to ignore the problem. It was also, for the first time, and I remember when images from the Rana Plaza, even some that we still use sometimes in our talks, you see tags of clothing in the rubbles. I think that's what garnered ... It was tragic. It was over a thousand things, 1,100 workers that died in the collapse. There had been staff raising awareness about cracks in the walls, and they were seeing in the days before. So it was really tragic, but it was also just ... It was very visible. It was seeing Joe Fresh tags in the rubbles, or H&M tags in the rubbles. So, it was direct. It wasn't like, "Oh, this was a random shirt and maybe it'll end up with a tag on it." It was a lot more visual. Those moments where you connect things visually too ... Or it might have been even like, "Oh, I've seen this on the shelf." It hits home, whereas sometimes other things are very abstract for people. You can watch a documentary on cocoa in Cote d'Ivoire and you eat chocolate every day, but what the guy is farming in his hand doesn't look like the chocolate bar in your bag. Do you know what I mean? It's like this disconnect of like, well, "Okay, but I don't know if that ends up in what I eat and buy. It's too far away."

Julie: Those moments that really hit home are precious in the fight that it can garner attention, and you can garner a rally of you need to do something. A lot of different actions have happened after the Rana Plaza. But it's also sad that it needs those moments to be advanced. There's great NGOs that do, you know, bring the spotlight on certain topics or whether it's about palm oil industry or whether it's deforestation. But then you go back to other things. It does work over time. I remember when I was like a teenager or even pre-teen, I would say ... It was the years of the Nike boycotts, it was child labor in Nike supply chains. Today, Nike's probably one of the ... Not that they do everything right, but they are a lot ... They've really cleaned up their act. A lot of that was because of this public exposure over years and years and years. If you look now in the rankings

and sustainability, they come up quite high. So it's good to see that those things have pushed companies forward and hopefully that continues.

Gilad: I really want to thank you for stopping by and joining us today. It's eye opening and it's, at times, really hard to hear. But it's also good to know that we are moving in the right direction. There's so much work to do, starting with each of us, but it seems like we're getting somewhere. Thank you.

*[Theme music fades in]*

Julie: Thanks for having me. Thanks for the discussion.

Gilad: My name is Gilad Cohen.

Simona: And I'm Simone Ramkisson.

Gilad: This podcast is edited and produced by Brandon Fragomeni and Alex Castellani. Our associate producer is Ron Ma.

Simona: This is an initiative of JAYU, a charity that shares human rights stories through the arts.

*[Music fades out]*

Gilad: If you enjoyed this podcast, help us make more of them by donating whatever you can. Visit us online at jayu.ca/donate.