



CleanLaw 87

Charleston: Race, Water, and the Coming Storm, with Susan Crawford, Michelle Mapp, and Hannah Perls — June 26, 2023

Hannah Perls:

Welcome to Clean Law, from Harvard's Environmental and Energy Law Program. I'm Hannah Perls, a senior staff attorney with EELP, and in this episode I speak with Susan Crawford, the John A. Riley clinical professor here at Harvard Law School and Michelle Mapp, an Equal Justice Works law fellow at the ACLU of South Carolina and former CEO of the South Carolina Community Loan Fund about Susan's most recent book, *Charleston: Race, Water, and the Coming Storm*. I should also note both Susan and Michelle are just speaking for themselves and not on behalf of their current or former organizations.

Now, before we really dive into the book, I first want to make sure our listeners have a sense of who you are, how you know each other, and of course your relationship to Charleston. Susan, maybe we could start with you. You have previously served as special assistant to the president for science, technology, and innovation in the Obama administration. You worked as a partner at Wilmer, Cutler, and Pickering, and of course, you've written numerous books, many about the telecom industry and the technology revolution. I'm very curious what made you decide to tell this story and specifically to focus on Charleston?

Susan Crawford:

Well, I've always been interested in the line between public and private, what the public sector is responsible for, what's government good for, and I got the chance to interview former mayor Joe Riley in Charleston. He'd been mayor for 40 years. I was delighted to talk to him. He was touted as America's favorite mayor. I checked in with a local journalist in Charleston before talking to Riley, and that person, Jack Hitt, told me to ask the mayor about the water. I said "Water?" Anyway, I did ask the mayor about the water and he sort of clammed up. He said, "It's going to be expensive." He didn't have much else to say about it. This seemed to me to provide the opportunity for a real quest. That was in February 2018, and I spent the next four years trying to figure out what was happening in Charleston when it came to the water. At first I thought it was going to be a sort of celebration, triumph of local progressive government, but the story changed along the way.

Hannah Perls:

We're definitely going to get into how that story changed and what it looks like. Susan, you and I have talked before as white women at Harvard Law about the need to be critical of those identities and the privileges that we carry in racial justice spaces in particular. This is a book on climate change and race and how they intersect in this city. I was wondering if you could just talk a bit about how you found your personal or professional identities changing the way you went about writing this story.



Susan:

I was extraordinarily lucky to be introduced to Michelle Mapp, among several other Black residents of Charleston. My identity as a white woman caused me to just shut up and listen, and I'm very grateful for that opportunity.

Michelle Mapp:

You know I do think it's worth discussing Susan's approach to the book which is very different than what we've seen and a lot that's been written around this subject, and her use of the voices of people who live in the community who often aren't the voices that are uplifted and heard from. It's an important point both when folks read the book but also when discussing the subject.

Hannah:

Susan, do you want to say anything about sort of how you went about writing it? Because it doesn't read like a book written by a law professor. It reads as a modern political history, I think, in some ways.

Susan:

I was inspired by *Common Ground*, which took the same approach to the very difficult story of busing in Boston and tells the story through the lives of four or five characters all the way back to their great-great grandparents. My book is in no way on par with that classic, but it seemed to me that the only way to tell the story was to have it in the voices of the people who live this story, not my voice. It was also inspiring for me to spend time with Michelle. As you can tell, from being on the podcast with her, she's an extraordinary human being. That was the method, just to make this a story that could touch people, reach them, and make them realize that there are voices that are never heard from.

Hannah:

Susan, could you talk a bit about how you and Michelle connected? Then Michelle, I want to turn to you and your really extraordinary background.

Susan:

I was lucky to be introduced to Michelle Mapp through Caroline Malden. I first met Michelle in October 2018 when she was CEO of the South Carolina Community Loan Fund, and she was just about to go to law school, and she'd also spent over 90 minutes in traffic that morning because of a flood. It was quite a moment for her and for me, and I kept talking to her over the years since then.

Hannah:

Of course, now I want to switch gears to talk about you, Michelle, and your background and how you relate to South Carolina. As I mentioned, you have a pretty extraordinary background. In addition to recently earning your JD, you have a master's in engineering management, a master's in public administration. You are a former high school teacher, operations research analyst, consultant, and of course former CEO. You've served on numerous



boards of economic justice organizations and advisory committees at the local, state, and national levels. This is an abbreviated bio. Of course, now as an attorney and an EJW fellow at the ACLU, you're focused on housing, on securing tenants right to counsel in South Carolina. Can you talk a bit about your relationship to South Carolina, both personally and professionally?

Michelle:

Yes. I always say I'm a Charleston native sort of both of my parents were born and raised in Charleston, and so my family has deep roots here. My father was military, so I was actually born in Germany, but went to high school in Charleston and consider this to be home. After college and graduate school, I lived in Atlanta and my husband and I made the transition back to Charleston where we first met when he was in the Navy here in Charleston. November 1st of this year will be 22 years that I've been living back in the Charleston area.

Hannah:

Can you talk a bit about how as an economic rights advocate and as a housing advocate, you have seen climate change start to infiltrate those conversations in those spaces?

Michelle:

Yeah. Having worked at the South Carolina Community Loan Fund, that started off as just a housing trust fund, so really focused on the development and financing of housing, particularly on the peninsula of Charleston. It's hard to talk about housing and not run into the water and understand the impact that flooding was beginning to have in Charleston over the last 20 years. I think as we sit here now on a very overcast day where we've seen lots of rain, where my son read to me yesterday that this was the coolest May and so far start of June that we've had in history here, it's hard not to recognize the impact that climate change is having on our community.

Hannah:

Maybe that's a good transition to just give our listeners to maybe are less familiar with Charleston a sense of the place. I want to talk both about climate change but also race and the legacy of segregation that informs how these impacts of climate change are distributed. Maybe Susan, we could talk with you because this is of course the focus of your book. Can you just paint a picture of Charleston today as you describe it in your book?

Susan:

Charleston plays a really important role in America's history as a painful locus of our racial horror in this country, beginning as one of the places where many of the people brought enslaved from West Africa first arrived in Charleston, 40% of them. It was the center of the domestic trade in enslaved people later on. Today, you can think of it as topographically like a Manhattan. There's a very small historic peninsula where the first settlers first landed and that was built out over fill. 60% of that peninsulas just fill land, filled in over trash. Then it has sprawling suburban areas also built over marsh that were added on to the city of Charleston by Mayor Riley during the years from 1975 to 2015. It is a very congested, pressured area these days. It has almost no public transportation, tremendous weight of tourism arriving there, 7 million tourists a year, and also extraordinary gentrification and displacement of Black residents of Charleston over the years.



To all of that now is being added the ravages of sea level rise. It's very, very low. Many people in Charleston live at 10 feet above sea level or lower. Mayor Riley in fact told Congress in 1989 that with three feet of sea level rise, most of his city would be inundated. Well, those days are coming in a matter of decades, not centuries. Black residents of Charleston have mostly been displaced, frankly, off into pockets of areas on the peninsula and the east side and the west side, and many have moved to North Charleston. There's also a very large population of descendants of Gullah Geechee residents on both the west sides and east sides of the larger Charleston region. Charleston is everything about America sort of distilled. Enormous growth, enormous focus on profit, a deep rootedness in our history of racism and now facing a lot of pressures from both the water and from development.

Hannah:

Maybe I can flag for our listeners if they're not from Charleston, but they're in other cities, what you're describing to me sounds like the American city in many, many ways. It is a story about Charleston, but it is also a story I think about many cities. I know for me personally, I'm sitting in Cambridge, Massachusetts. These are many of the issues that Boston is grappling with at the same time. This is America's story in many ways. Michelle, maybe I can just turn to you and have you fill in more of the details about what it is like to be in Charleston in particular, to do the work you're doing in Charleston.

Michelle:

Sure. I would say that Charleston is environmentally, historically, and culturally a beautiful place. That beauty is wrapped in a very painful past that I think we see playing out in our country today in that we want to selectively remember I think the good parts. I think those 7 million tourists who come here every year get an opportunity to see the really beautiful historical buildings and churches and places often without having to grapple with the very ugly hard reality of slavery in America and what those repercussions have been, particularly in this city that is now facing gentrification.

South Carolina has one of the highest eviction rates in the country. When the City of Charleston was listed as the top gentrifying city in America, City of North Charleston was listed as the city in America with the highest eviction rate. These statistics aren't unrelated. We see this displacement of folks who literally built this city, and it's hard, I think, being a daughter of the city and coming back and wanting to grapple with how do we ensure equitable opportunities for everyone, and particularly as a mother and as a former teacher who saw up close and personal what that impact is on our young people. How do we ensure that there's opportunity for everyone and that this place with such historical significance is a place that all of us will always be able to call home?

Hannah:

Sort of between the two of you, it sounds like it is really a story of two different cities all within the same geographic locus. To your point about how do we ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the same quality of life, to participate in the same rich, vibrant, beautiful community, we need to talk about the side of history that maybe is less attractive and harder to discuss. Susan, I think you did a great job in your book of noting that race and climate change share the characteristic that they're really hard to talk about. A lot of times we don't want to talk about them and now we have to.



Speaking of how we talk about these things, it's important to begin with tone. I mentioned that the story of Charleston is the story of America, and I think especially as academics, there's a temptation to talk about these personal challenges as an opportunity, as a sort of fascinating challenge, as the canary in the coal mine and fundamentally on the ground these are grief-laden processes. I just wanted for you both to talk a bit about how you approach these types of conversations.

Susan:

In working on the book and in talking to people about the subject of strategic relocation, which is what I call it, after the book came out, it really has seemed to me that this is a grief-laden process and one that we should approach for all communities similarly to the way we approach the end of life, that whatever resources you have when you turn 65 and you're close to dying, we have a series of publicly funded hospice services that show up and involve working with entire community social services, thinking about palliative care towards the end of life.

It has seemed to me that the parallels between that way of thinking about a transformation or a transition and this relocation subject, it's not overwrought, that actually what we need to be doing over decades very carefully is working with communities to all of us together contemplate how you take a culture and a series of meanings deeply attached to a particular geographic location and help people with a lot of money and a lot of resources through the transition to another geographic location that still feels like home and is open and welcoming to everybody. That requires thinking about density and transit and housing and climate and everything all at once, but not as technocratic subjects, rather as a transition, a process of moving together and helping everybody live thriving lives.

For myself, I can only think of it in terms of the simple statement, what's government good for? It should be good at protecting its people. And this is a moment, these next few decades when we have to be focusing on protecting people along the coasts.

Hannah:

Michelle, I'd ask you the same question.

Michelle:

Yeah. I think for me in approaching the conversation, I often think about it in terms of why would someone buy life insurance or why would someone have a will done? It's an anticipation of this inevitability that you understand is going to happen and that you want to make provisions for those that you're leaving behind, the sort of care and feeding. And so it's not necessarily something that you, I don't want to say want to do, but it's something that you realize that you have to do or you need to do in recognition that there's going to come a day where you're no longer going to be here and it's going to be, as you say, a sad day, this sort of grief-laden process. But it's something that you fundamentally recognize that as part of your responsibilities to the next generation that you're going to do this thing.

I think as I have conversations with folks about this, it's really sort of trying to help folks understand why would you buy life insurance? Why do you make that payment annually or monthly for life insurance? Because you know this thing is coming. I think in this thinking about climate change and the impacts of climate change and the impacts that it's going to have on communities, helping folks to really think of an example of where they're



already making an investment, where they're already thinking about the inevitability of something that's coming in the future, how do they plan for that thing? How do they ensure that their children and their children's children will be taken care of?

Hannah:

I really appreciate that. This is not just about the challenge before us, but it's about people and their legacy and their families and their sense of self and the place where they have been, and I think uncertainty about what is to come and where they will go and what will happen to the things they care about. I think you both laid that out really beautifully. Michelle, you kept coming back to this notion of inevitability, and I think one of the challenges Susan documents in the book is there are a lot of people who refuse to acknowledge that inevitability of climate change and the rising seas. I wanted to switch gears a little bit to talk about, you know we are a law and policy podcast, why is it, do you think, that we're seeing decision makers not just in Charleston, but around the country, double down on development in the face of these tremendous and increasing risks?

Susan:

Local government officials up and down the coastline put this on the "too hard" pile, because their election outlook is brief. They've got a couple years in office, maybe four, and starting to talk about the enormous risks of living where they're living, put all those risks on the table, is not predictive of reelection. Also, they're heavily dependent on property tax, so they need to have those receipts coming in to do everything else the city cares about, to make sure there's a police force and the streets are cleaned. Necessarily, their horizons are very limited. Even in private, this is almost too hard for them to talk about it. They know it's coming. They're hoping that someone else will ride to the rescue.

I don't fault Charleston or any other city for looking at this in such a short-term way. The whole system has given them very few choices, very few incentives to plan for the long-term. Starting at the top, we don't have any federal leadership on this issue. There isn't money coming to cities except in the form of highly reactive disaster relief money. Every incentive, including federal flood insurance, is set up to actually subsidize increasing development in the floodplain. Long story short, it's too hard, too scary, and it's in no one's political interest to be upfront about this, including at the very highest level.

Hannah:

Maybe just to your point, a great example is FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency changed the way they calculate premiums under that federal insurance program that tries to account for actuarial risk, the actual risk to properties. South Carolina, along with Louisiana and several other states just filed a lawsuit challenging that methodology. It's very hard to make things harder for people in the short term. That is not a position anyone wants to be in. As a mother, I found that to be very, very true. We're not just talking about local incentives, we're talking about local, state, federal and needing buy-in across the board for folks to say, "You know what? This is an inevitable problem and we need to do the hard things to account for what's coming." Michelle, I do want to turn to you and the reasons you see folks doubling down in spite of climate change.

Michelle:



Yeah, I think part of it is just simply human nature in that as humans, we're bad at assessing risk. Our perception of risk is greatly influenced by who's most vulnerable to that risk. June 1st, hurricane season starts. I think for many folks here locally, you begin to see the admonitions to be prepared because we never know if this is going to be the year where we're going to have another Hurricane Hugo or not. I think for most folks who have the ability to pick up and leave and evacuate and go, that risk looks very different than folks who are dependent on public transportation or folks who are living paycheck to paycheck. The thought that I have to pick up and evacuate should a hurricane come, it makes that risk very differently.

I think it's that same sort of thinking that's translated to the issue of climate change is that I think folks recognize, and it's hard not to, living here and seeing how often we're flooded and the impacts of just what used to be a normal rainstorm, I think folks definitely realize that, "Hey, climate change is real and climate change is happening." I think folks are less aware maybe of what those real risks are and what does it mean? Our history in this country, in this community, has always been that we do not act often until a tragedy strikes. It's after the hurricane that we act or after a school shooting or after something happens that we as a country tend to act on many of these issues. Unfortunately, the fear I think that drives me is that what does this mean, both in terms of loss of life, but also loss of community, loss of culture, loss of our connection to this place, and to this land.

Hannah:

There were several things that I just wanted to pull out on what you said because there was so much there. I think first you mentioned people have a right to know and just the fundamental idea that we should have consistent risk disclosure requirements is still something that we don't see nationwide. That was just a key policy piece that I wanted to pull out. The other notion that just understanding that the way risk is distributed in these communities is racialized. I know there's been studies out of Redfin and the First Street Foundation that now tell us that because of the legacies of redlining in these communities, folks of color tend to be in the places that are most at risk to climate change impacts. We've been talking about risk a lot. I want to make explicit that that amount of risk is typically falling along lines of race as well as socioeconomic status.

Something that both you and Susan hit on, this idea that we only respond afterwards. That response is this really extraordinary amount of federal assistance. That federal assistance also tends to be distributed along lines of race and income. This is something we've talked about on the podcast before. It's not, I think, intentional, but a function of how we decide which communities are the best investment. These cost-benefit analyses that are based on property values tend to allocate funds to those who already have money. I just wanted to pull out the layers that need to be disentangled or pulled apart if we're going to try and solve this problem in an equitable way.

Susan:

A big point here is that we have an opportunity to talk about the difference between private sector incentives and the public sector. It should not be that we operate always according to the Matthew Principle, the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. The whole point of government is to ensure that that is not the case. Left to its own devices, the private sector will do exactly that. It'll be easy for richer people to leave and they'll have second homes, they'll go where they need to go. Developers are already using climate data to build inland, in places where they know people will want to move. In the absence of planning, there'll be nowhere for the most vulnerable populations to go. As Michelle says, this will result in miserable loss of culture, loss of attachment, and we could forestall that if we took our role as government policymakers more seriously.



Michelle:

I also think it's important to highlight that it's going to force a fundamental shift in what we think about in terms of property rights and the right to develop in America, which are I think issues that we haven't necessarily had to grapple with in this country. What does it mean from a public policy standpoint? What does it mean from a legal standpoint when I "own" a piece of property that's in one of these vulnerable communities and we know that the water's going to rise and the water's coming. What then am I allowed to do with that property in the meantime? What's going to be that sort of trigger point or tipping point for local, state, federal government to say, "No, you can't do X, Y, Z here because of the potential risk and what's going to happen." I think that we are at the very beginning of those conversations in this country, and in this community.

I think it's going to shift, I think what we fundamentally thought about in terms of property rights. I think that that's a conversation that we don't necessarily want to have because so much wealth is tied to who owns the land, who can do what they want with the land, where they want to, when they want to. It's going to shift our values. It's going to shift, I think, wealth in this country and how do we account for maybe the loss of wealth as we lose developable land.

Hannah:

Michelle, I want to dive a bit deeper into your area of expertise because it is now both sides. You worked for almost a decade as the CEO of this community financing organization. Susan talked about private finance following the Matthew Principle. With the South Carolina Community Loan Fund, you really filled a gap there. I was wondering if you could just talk a bit more about the lessons learned or your experiences while you were the CEO of the South Carolina Community Loan Fund and what ultimately drove you to get a JD.

Michelle:

Sure. The South Carolina Community Loan Fund is a US treasury-certified community development financial institution. We grew out of a City of Charleston initiative. There was a mayor's council on homelessness and affordable housing. A group of citizens from within that group were charged at looking at creative ways of financing affordable housing on the peninsula of Charleston. Our organization was sort of seeded and grew out of the City of Charleston's, department of Housing and Community Development. I think what I learned over my 13 years there was that money's not enough. You could have all of the money in the world, but if you didn't have permission, if you didn't have the right regulatory environment, if you didn't have the laws in place, that it was very difficult still facilitating the development in these primarily disinvested communities. In many of the communities that we worked in, not only was there a lack of housing, but there's often not a grocery store, not a bank, not childcare center, all of the sort of elements that you would need to have a thriving community.

I think from the very beginning of the organization's origin, we recognized how much public policy and advocacy needed to go hand in hand with the capital. I think over the years I began to see that more and more and began to see a need to challenge the system. The example I often use is *Plessy v. Ferguson* was the law of the land for such a long time. Oftentimes we, I think, don't challenge or we're very accepting of this is the law and this is just the way it is. I began to say, well, some of these things, for example our Landlord Tenant Act in South Carolina is created and is designed in a way that's causing this highest-in-the-nation eviction rate in South Carolina. There's something that someone should do about it. At some point, I don't know if it was my husband or my children, but someone said, "I think that someone should be you."



Hannah:

You can count on family to give you the best and the worst ideas.

Michelle:

Yes.

Hannah:

Sometimes those are the same thing. I wanted to maybe pick up on what you were talking about in terms of thriving community. I think it's really helpful for us as policy people and certainly as lawyers, we can be siloed so quickly. When we talk about a thriving community, you mentioned housing, grocery stores, childcare, banks, we can think of a lot of things that make our communities places that allow us to grow as individuals and as a family of people. I was just wondering if you could talk a bit about, in an ideal world, if we shift our vision from the problem to the solution for you both, what would a capable, dignity-centered response to climate change look like in Charleston so that at the end of the day, everyone has the opportunity to live in a thriving community as they define it for themselves?

Michelle:

Well, I think for me it's one where the people who are going to be most impacted and who are losing the most, both in terms of their sense of place, sense of community, cultural identity, are allowed to think creatively about how and where they want to recreate those things. Also a recognition of, as we talked about earlier, that it is a very deeply personal, grief-laden process, that there are folks who don't want to leave, who will not want to participate in any process because by its very nature, it's accepting sort of this inevitability that we got to be able to make space for all of that. But also recognizing that forced evacuation and permanent displacement are also an inevitability and how do we prepare people so that there is a shift and a transition in power in a way where folks are making decisions about their lives, about future generations in a way that they haven't been empowered to do so historically.

It requires a lot of things that we've never done before, that we've never had to grapple with before. It requires that those who are in power and who have the resources give up, I think in some respects, that power and those resources and the need to be in charge and in control of the process to folks who haven't had power and resources and maybe the experience and the knowledge and skills to lead the process. How do you practically do that, I think, is what we're all grappling with. It is hard. If it was easy, I think we would've already started to do something, and so how do we begin? I think that that's part of the problem is that we have just refused to even begin to have these conversations as a community, as a state, or as a country. But they're conversations that we *must* have because whether we choose to put our head in the sand or not, the water is coming, the hurricanes are coming, these weather events are coming as we are already seeing in our country.

To just say that we are going to be reactionary is not going to be a sustainable strategy because if you have one Hurricane Katrina every 10 years is one thing. If you're having two Hurricane Katrinas in the same year or a year after year after year, there is an economic cost to having to deal with these weather conditions that we as a country are going to be forced to take. I think communities, particularly African American communities, underserved communities, along these coastal communities are going to have to decide for themselves do they



want to be proactive in thinking about this or are they willing to just be reactive and wait for someone else to decide their futures?

Susan:

I'm so glad Michelle laid that all out. I think that we have a lot of mismatches here. We have a sense of urgency that we have a matter of decades, not centuries. At the same time, not all the risk is on the table. As Michelle says, our own cognitive deficits make it difficult for us to take that risk on board and our sense of attachment to place makes it very difficult to think about leaving at any level. At the same time, it's not clear that the resources will be devoted to our most vulnerable communities and the freedom given to make this a truly voluntary transition. I think we can do it. I'm not a wild optimist because I think with the right intention and the right amount of risk on the table and a commitment by government to begin, frankly decommissioning infrastructure that's going to be swamped, that there is an end state for a city's obligation to continue to maintain roads, electricity, sewer, and power will help us frame the conversation.

The only country that's doing this at the moment is the Netherlands. One of their paths for dealing with climate change over the next few decades involves retreat. They never built in the flood plain to begin with. They don't have that problem that we have. We can also learn from Bangladesh, which is already talking to 25 cities about being receding cities and what capacity they're going to need to bring in more people. There are elements of this happening around the globe, but as Michelle says, it's a multidimensional, deeply human, deeply cultural, set of issues that we don't have great muscles for dealing with. In fact, our history as a country when it comes to relocation is painful. So, here's our chance, let's think about it steadily starting now as a process that is going to take a couple of decades at least.

Hannah:

Maybe I can zoom us out a bit further because you both talked about in different ways sort of what is needed from our government and the types of decisions that they need to allow, the type of power they need to give up, the type of leadership that they need to recognize in communities. Then there's the way our government currently works. I want to ask you both as attorneys, if you had a magic wand, what would a government capable of doing great things, Susan to your point, capable of protecting its people. Michelle, capable of equitably distributing resources such that people have the freedom to decide for themselves where and how and when they're going to go. What does that government look like?

Susan:

Well, it's a government that is not focused on economic growth as its primary output. It's a government like the kind of government you see in a time of war or catastrophe where people think about their fellow citizens, suddenly their minds are open, their eyes are open to the people around them and are capable of understanding that we're all in this together. You'd have to have leadership that set that tone, frankly, from the top, in order for all these community-based processes to work. A lot of this happens at the ballot box. We have to elect people who are capable of looking beyond their short-term plans and their short-term success in office to think about the long-term survival of this country.

Look, 40% of the American population lives on the coasts. If our coastline was an economic entity of its own, it would be the third largest economic unit in the world. So this is a question of tremendous economic moment. As



Michelle says, when we see a lot of catastrophes lining up one after the other, we will be dealing with this in a sort of Mad Max kind of way. It would be far better to think in advance. You'd have to have different kinds of people who felt free to be in office and weren't beholden to the short-term commercial interests and who were willing to relinquish power when it needed to be relinquished.

Michelle:

For me, I think about it, so growing up military, if you're ever in that world, you realize that it's almost a country within a country. We, in this country, invest heavily in our military, but in a lot of ways we then allow our military to operate as it needs to in order to "get the job done." They grow their own leadership, they have created this sort of structure where they take care of it. In a lot of ways, I see that as a model that could be applied in this very same way where you recognize that as the US government, we're going to have to make a significant investment in addressing climate change. What does that entity look like? How is it created? How does it have leadership? How does it grow its own leadership from within to be able to address these issues?

I do think that there's an example or a model in some ways of America making a significant financial investment and then creating this system that operates within the broader system. For us, the military is now worldwide, the US military is. How does it do what it do and do it in a way that's valued and respected and all the things that folks think about the US military?

It's something I've been thinking about because I've been trying to think about, you know, what is an example of where America's leadership has made a significant investment but also recognize that they aren't the experts in the issue and have kind of gotten out of the way and allowed the folks who that's what they do, to do what they do. That's kind of the only example I could come up with of where in America we've trusted this entity to do. I'm not saying that the results are ideal or what everyone would want them to be, but it is an example of where the US government makes this investment and gets out of the way and allows those individuals within that system to operate and to create the solutions that need to happen.

Hannah:

I hear from you both: We need a lot of resources, but those resources don't matter if you don't have, Michelle to your point, decisiveness and discretion, and Susan to your point, a long-term vision. We need all those ingredients together. Susan, did you want to quickly also talk a bit about the need to walk and chew gum at the same time to deal with mitigation and adaptation as we think about solutions?

Susan:

Yes. Right now, 97% of money being spent around the world on climate is going to mitigation or the green energy transition, and it's absolutely clear we need to be devoting a lot of resources to that. I am personally focused on adaptation. This other side of the climate story, I don't want anybody to take from that that I don't care about the emissions. Clearly we have to. The trouble is that even now the oceans have warmed more quickly over the last 40 years than ever. We have the Antarctic melting very quickly. Same thing happening in the Arctic. Global currents are slowing.

All of this is happening based on existing emissions and it's going to be going extraordinarily rapidly, great velocity, great uncanniness, unthinkability of the changes that are coming in just a few years. I think we need to,



at the same time, focus our human energy on helping people, people lead thriving lives, and that their generations to come lead thriving lives. Already the ravages of the impacts of sea level rise are affecting real people's grandchildren, not future grandchildren to come. They're already being hurt by this. It is past time for us to be stepping up our investments and our compassion when it comes to helping our people thrive.

Hannah:

Well, I'm very, very grateful to you both for lending your time and expertise here in this really broad and I think vulnerable conversation. Before we wrap up, I want to make sure our listeners know about the work that you're currently doing and where to find that work. Michelle, maybe we could start with you on just the work that you're currently engaged in with the ACLU and how folks can find you.

Michelle:

Sure. I am at the ACLU of South Carolina working on policy and legislation, providing legal representations to tenants who are facing evictions. And I can be found at ACLUSC.org and appreciate the opportunity for this conversation.

Susan:

I appreciate any chance I get to talk to Michelle Mapp. As for me, I'll be teaching the law of climate adaptation at Harvard Law School next year and working with students on writing projects, particularly having to do with adaptation across the year. Come and find me. I'm on Twitter @scrawford and I'll just keep writing about this subject. I've learned so much over the last four years and I have so much left to learn.

Hannah:

Great. Well thank you both and we'll make sure to put a link to the ACLU site that Michelle mentioned. Of course, we'll put a link to Susan's book. Again, Charleston: Race, Water, and the Coming Storm. Michelle and Susan, thank you both again for being on CleanLaw.

Susan:

Thank you.

Michelle:

Thank you.