

Speaker 1 (00:05):

This is Caroline Peller, chair of Greenberg Charlie's global pro bono program and litigation shareholder in the New York office. I'd like to welcome you to Greenberg charts pro bono podcast. Good in practice because everyone has a story. This episode of good in practice tells the story of a teenage orphan from war-torn South Sudan, named Mac along, and how Greenberg charge with the assistance of the international refugees assistance project obtain humanitarian parole for him and reunited him with his brother and belief in the United States, or he is now pursuing an affirmative asylum claim. Mack alongs case came to Greenberg chard by way of coincidence and a bond between two families. You're going to hear about how Nicole Goodwin, the managing shareholder of Greenberg chart's Phoenix office and her husband. Dan got to know Molly and learned about his brother and realize that Greenberg chard could help none Cole's practice emphasizes corporate governance, disputes, financial services, litigation, real estate litigation, post acquisition disputes, healthcare litigation, and franchise litigation.

Speaker 1 (01:16):

In short, she's not an immigration attorney, but with the help of the international refugees assistance project, Kristin Eng an immigration shareholder in Greenburg, chards Northern Virginia office and John Shumate, a corporate and securities associate in Phoenix office. Nicole helped a family who had supported hers. My first question is if you could just give some background on how Greenberg Traurig got mock alongs case. Sure. Um, actually it was through a personal connection. Um, I had, um, met this wonderful gentleman by the name of Molly who was working as a caretaker for my son who has disabilities and requires a lot of care around the clock care. And, um, I got to know Molly's and was very impressed by his composure. And we, we started to share information about our backgrounds and that sort of thing. And the shared with me that he had been part of the second or third wave of the lost boys of Sudan has come to the United States as a refugee a few years earlier.

Speaker 1 (02:21):

Um, fleeing strikes in South Sudan. And, um, to me, it's Melisa to just immediately respond to his warmth and his optimism for life. And it was very, um, surprising to me that, that he had lived through as much trouble as he had in terms of the warfare and the other issues that he had faced through to just come to the United States. That's how I met him. And then as I got to know my ways, I learned that he really was so worried every single day. And it was on his mind that he had a brother who was lumped back back in Africa. It was too young to join him when he came to the United States. And that little boy's name was buck Yvonne. And tell me a little bit about how you determined that that Greenbird chart could help bring MOC along into the country to reunite with his brother.

Speaker 1 (03:13):

It was one of those, I think like unit courses and the university had just invited representatives, um, of Iraq on the genre international refugee project to the farms to give training. And, um, a few of us in the Phoenix office had, we had an event and I was really excited about the opportunity to do some pro bono work, to help international refugees. And it was about his same point in time that I was learning from police about locking along and mock him on status. So along with born in South Sudan, but then fled South Sudan to live in Kenya with, um, with, uh, with a relative to stay safe. But he was essentially a boy without, without country. And he was not legally in Kenya. Um, he had fled South Sudan. Um, he was being taken care of just purely, you know, by the grace of a relative.

Speaker 1 (04:06):

So did you bring the idea to the family and say, Hey, there's way we can get your brother here and Greenberg is going to handle it. Yeah. So I'm telling me, I'll never forget that conversation. Then I said, you know, he knew I was a business lawyer and I don't, you know, I'm not a, I'm not an immigration lawyer. I said, you know, we actually are really refocusing our efforts fund, you know, some of our work with Iraq. And I said, I now know a little bit, I wasn't good training. And we have this very strong firm commitment to help in this area. So I don't know if your case would be accepted. You have to go through a process, but I would, I would love to try. And, um, Lillian was over the moon and that's what started the intake process to bring Mike along into the firm, as a client. Wow. That is amazing because most of our immigration cases, as you know, come as referrals from immigration organizations, um, but to have been in the right place at the right time to be at the training, then to know somebody who needed that and to say, we're going to do this for you. That's outstanding.

Speaker 1 ([05:09](#)):

Maybe it makes sense for you to take the lead. Why don't you tell us a little bit about your family, your family's story and how it is that it was important to have Mac along, come here.

Speaker 2 ([05:23](#)):

We got, uh, I left my country, I believe like over 10 years ago. And I clearly remember when we lost the parent. I left McClung when it was, I believe three. And, um, we got away out to Kenya in a refugee camp. So we lived there for good amount of time. And, um, from there McClellan was living with my uncle, um, that was taking care of him. I believe back that's when, uh, I was heading over here. My case was approved. Everything was okay. So that's when I knew it had the news, my, my uncle passed away. So it was really a hard time for McClellan living over there by himself. And the good news I was living here with my cousin, John, that have a family back in Kenya. So I shared information with them and, um, you know, it was really willing to help label these with these family back in Kenya.

Speaker 2 ([06:30](#)):

And it helped me even, um, to pay for some ticket from Sudan all the way to Kenya. And, uh, we moved McMullen from South Sudan to Kenya and McMullen lived there with, uh, John family, or I believe almost three years. And over there, John was early, um, doing his paperwork or his family to come over here. So he's put another stress on me, McClellan now being leveled himself and Kenya was nobody so on there. I think that's when I was working at Mather job and that's when I met Nicole and then, and, um, you know, we've become really good. And, um, I remember it was, uh, Dan asking me you're really a good guy, man. We never met a really good person. Like you like, uh, will you leave here with, uh, I said, I live with my brother and my cousin and I got another brother in Kenya.

Speaker 2 ([07:33](#)):

So he like, why is Nadia with you? I'm like, uh, bringing somebody with here is like really hard as about it. And everybody like, ah, you know, don't, don't even think about it. It's really hard to bring somebody over here, especially your siblings. I was like, oh man, my, um, cousin about to bring his family were here and I got my brother that is about to be left behind with nobody. So I like, um, I can talk to my wife and the call was probably is you can do something. I like really? You're like, yeah. I'm like, okay. So from that day I remember that's when, uh, I believe, um, then went home and talked to Nicole about, um, like I got malaria, but brother and Kenya and um, we want to bring him over here. I believe that it was late night. That's when I got a message from Nicole.

Speaker 2 ([08:29](#)):

Um, I really remember sending me the passport of your brother. I'm like, oh, what? So I started, uh, digging around for passport and I talked to my cousin wife, uh, send passport through, I think Nicole logo eight. I'm like, um, I will let you know when everything is okay. I'm like, okay, that is where everything is started to beginning, but I'm back to the story back home in Kenya, McClellan was really living, uh, okay. With, uh, John family, but things get bad when, um, the family left. Yeah. In Phoenix though, it gave me a lot of stress. I think John and Nicole, I remember that it gave me a lot of stress or gets me, I remember, um, a Columbian lab by himself. Well, at least we're like over a month and that's when everything was being done by, um, Nicole and John, really to speed up the process, which, um, it was a man in my heart.

Speaker 2 ([09:37](#)):

It was really a lot of help that it was put together to get my brother to save safety. And, uh, I hope he will remember the help, uh, Nicole did to him and John, you know? And, uh, if you harness, Nicole did a great job, did a great job. I'm pretty sure even though I, I just went somewhere. I don't think this one would be possible, you know? And, um, the airport Nicole put through, I think it was beyond, uh, our professional because I think it was trying to help, you know, it's like, actually you got your own kids. You're saying it drowning. What are you going to do? Just what your son dying over you jamming to help, you know, I think that's what Nicole did and helped my brother regardless of, uh, you know, of my income or whatever I gotta pay. You know, it's, it's, it's a blessing, the blessing, Anna, we had amazing parents that always, always updating, always updating me. You know, it's, it's a lot of work that have been done. And without Nicole, I think, uh, we wouldn't know any like, uh, Greenberg. I never even heard anything.

Speaker 2 ([10:59](#)):

Yeah. The, in the company, oh, this is what we do. You know, it's, you guys are really doing an amazing job, helping people and, uh, I'm willing to do anything that feels, uh, uh, I want to do anything with you guys.

Speaker 1 ([11:19](#)):

Thank you for sharing all of that. I have a couple of questions. Um, was your brother living alone by himself, in Kenya for that month? That the other family left?

Speaker 2 ([11:29](#)):

Um, when, um, the family left John, uh, brother-in-law was coming to help his sister to the headboard. And, um, when he came through, like, um, we let him stay for like, oh, a mom, um, in Kenya to stay with McClellan until we figured out like, what is going on with his brothers, from there, everything was going smooth then, um, [inaudible] we let them go back home.

Speaker 1 ([11:58](#)):

Yeah. And my understanding is that it is really difficult to get humanitarian parole cases. Granted, was that what you learned from Iraq? Yeah, so we knew that this was like a, maybe not a full court shot, but like a half court shot in terms of getting yeah. Getting humanitarian parole granted. Um, and we had a backup plan if it wasn't. Um, but we were very, very fortunate that the application was granted. We never had to go to plan B, which would have been much more stressful and difficult, I think for, you

know, a more traditional refugee camp by the process, which, and lived in the camp and it experienced it and that's not what he wanted for his brother. So we were able to get, once we had that application, granted, they were able to get the credentials and we just booked a flight. I mean, you know, it was, it was like a very orderly way to come into the United States because he had, you know, he had his papers. So, um, he literally flew around the world. And John, can you tell us a little bit about what it looks like when you had to put that packet together and what information you need?

Speaker 2 ([13:07](#)):

Yeah. So we had to basically show why, um, mock along should, should come here, um, under the circumstances that he did and that entailed interviews with the, you know, between mock along the psychologist, it entailed, you know, getting really detailed statements from belief as well. Um, and you know, it's, it's a type of thing where it obviously going for the, you know, to the government and everything has to be truthful, but you also want to pinpoint, you know, the facts and the circumstances that really bring to light the kind of dire circumstances that the applicant is in.

Speaker 1 ([13:46](#)):

Can you tell us a little bit about how it differs from, for example, an asylum application where you also have to show dire circumstances, but this sounds like it's the type of process where you have to show something a little bit extra in order to get the process to move along quickly.

Speaker 2 ([14:02](#)):

Yeah, a little bit extra in the, you know, the, the keys, the fact that, you know, my belief was not, uh, there's not, you know, a us citizen. Um, and so that was the, the key factor of why it had to be humanitarian parole and his two key, you know, forms the thing it's, you know, 1 31 and 1 34 it's, it's the affidavit of support. Um, and also the actual travel document. And so, uh, outside of that, it was really just putting together a narrative of, um, mock alongs, you know, whole background from when he was young and their parents passed away to when he went to live in South Sudan. And when he went to live, as Willy said with his, um, with an uncle and Kenya and he passed away and, you know, just bring the, you know, to light the facts around that. And also, as Billy said as well, John, who was the cousin that there, you know, that Melissa was living with the United States and the family that Martha Long was living with in Kenya, you know, when they would move kind of the circumstances around Martha Long and the danger that he would be put in there,

Speaker 1 ([15:07](#)):

You know, given that Maki long travels on a south Sudanese passport. And he was essentially in Kenya, you know, without, uh, you know, without, uh, um, you know, a, a documented basis for being there, you would never have been able to even enter the United States without the humanitarian, you know, for all being granted. So the idea that, you know, when you have people who are just able to cross borders and then apply for asylum, that was never in the cards from, at Golan, just because of where he was. I mean, he was, it was stuck in Kenya, but you knew that you had a timeframe in which to work with. Then you were struggling to meet that when the family was going to move so that he wouldn't be left alone, right.

Speaker 2 ([15:45](#)):

I'm a corporate associate by profession. In other words, we don't, we don't interview a lot of people. We don't have to gather a whole, you know, a lot of facts pulling from, from different areas. Everything is

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more or less condensed in one area, whether, you know, for me as a young associate, it was, you know, it's, it's working in the data room with a bunch of documents, but this was different in the sense that, you know, I, we had to get facts and information from, you know, from a lead Malia had to pull together documentation, you know, uh, about the money he earns again, we had to interview, you know, a psychologist. Um, so it was just kind of a bunch of moving pieces that, um, for me, obviously it w it was not specifically on my shoulders, but the fact that Nicole was the way she is being, uh, you know, again, this is the only office that I've worked in, but she's a, a managing shareholder that's very accessible and willing to get her hands dirty as well. She, she was just amazing in the process as well.

Speaker 1 ([16:51](#)):

And Nicole or John, whoever wants to answer this, can you tell us about the day that you learned that the humanitarian parole had been granted and how you learned it? Gosh, I, so we, we can't tell this story without giving an enormous amount of credits to the office of, um, Congress person, Congressman Greg Stanton. And we were working closely with his office and had his support. Um, and he was an advocate for Maki along, um, and he had others in his staff who were very knowledgeable and were kind of going the extra mile in terms of phone calls and different things. And I just remember when we, when we got word, I mean, I was just like, it was, it's like winning like 10 cases all in one, you know, because it's this thing that, you know, is so, so rare and you can do all the right things, but it's going to depend ultimately on, you know, somebody making a decision and they get lots of, I mean, there are lots of people in this world, as we know who you, who present, I think very meritorious cases for humanitarian parole and they're denied.

Speaker 1 ([17:54](#)):

So we knew it was a long shot and that's what Iraq had told us all along. So it was just, um, it was elation. And tell me a little bit about the Congress person's involvement, because that seems like a step that most people wouldn't ordinarily take or think to take as part of a, an application for asylum P at any time. Can you tell us about how everyone made the decision to try to get the Congress person involved and a little bit about that? So we, we considered different sources of support, both at the state and the federal and the local level. And we had varying degrees of success with getting letters of support. Thankfully, I mean, Greg Stanton, I mean, his office is committed to family reunification. He's committed to vibrant communities here, um, in his district in Arizona. And he has staff members. Who've worked in the refugee rights arena, and they're very knowledgeable about some of the, kind of the gatekeepers. So he was very willing to help. And we got a letter of support from him, plus, you know, kind of additional guidance from his office in terms of making the application as attractive as possible. And Malia, can you tell us about the day that you learned that your brother was going to be able to come here and live here?

Speaker 2 ([19:12](#)):

Um, I clearly remember I was living and a CA email coming through from, uh, Nicole. Then I moved the approval approval. I was like, what, at a way, the blanket on like, wow, I've got to call him. This is very interesting. I got a call here. I call, I think it was late night. I'm like, okay, I'll go. When I come back from work. And, um, I was really amazed. I was really excited. I called them right away and I believe the way I've been about to call me Nicole and John, like, it was a really exciting moment, you know, the long, the long way that has been paid off. So we were all excited. John,

Speaker 1 ([19:54](#)):

Could you tell us a little bit about the process of then getting to the United States

Speaker 2 ([20:01](#)):

That was kind of a blur, just the, you know, for me hearing his, you know, of the news of coming, it seems like afternoons is just a blackout. Um, not, not thinking that things are really, you know, actually coming to fruition, but from our perspective, wasn't too intensive, but I think he actually had to drive a few hours and go through, um, an even an interview process and get, you know, his photo taken and all that. And then, you know, do the connecting flights, um, to come to the United States. And, um, Kristen, she actually reminded me a few days ago. I can't believe you were even thinking about going to Kenya to even, you know, have to connect and bring them back. And I said, oh my God, I forgot that that was actually an option that I had that I was going to. But at that point, I mean you're 150%. And so Don

Speaker 1 ([20:56](#)):

Was going to take us, he was going to get his shots. I need to get vaccinations. I'm going to, I remember you guys asking me if he could do that. And my response was absolutely yes, the firm will support it, but let's make sure it's necessary first because you will have to get all of his shots and any other documents. But it was, it was really, I mean, it was a cross office kind of contingency plan. So what happened was, I think Molly's is working with a travel agent to get the tickets, right? So I think Maki long had to go from Nairobi to Addis Ababa, to Ireland, and then in Chicago and his port of entry was going to be Chicago. So we had boots on the ground ready in our people from our Chicago office is if long encountered any difficulties at the port of entry.

Speaker 1 ([21:53](#)):

So, you know, that was a great thing about having the GT resources with our different offices, that we had our Chicago colleagues ready to step in. And, uh, they were on standby and it was like, you know, that movie Argo like, like along was totally legal. He had all the papers, but you're still waiting for him to, you know, go through safely and then heard that he had, and then once he got in to the United States, through Chicago, he got on a plane to Phoenix. John and I were waiting on the other side of TSA security waiting for and John to come through. And I don't know how much I did it with all of that trial while he still was standing and relatively bright-eyed after all of that,

Speaker 2 ([22:37](#)):

It's pretty impressive young man, to be able to deal with all that, you know, beyond the stress of, of the actual surroundings, you know, what you're living in. Also not knowing if you're even going to be able to come over to live with your brother to, as Nicole said, going through Ireland, going through different countries and even giving landing in Chicago, not knowing if, if you're, you know, if you'll still be able to permanently stay. Um, so kind of the strength of the human spirit and specifically MOC along with was, uh, it was amazing to see throughout the process.

Speaker 1 ([23:08](#)):

Yeah. I can tell that he's a very strong young man and all that, and a lot of it by himself and to have the supportive, Molina, your support, sort of his brother, I'm sure it was critical. I'd like to turn this question over to the Greenberg target immigration attorney, who's helping on the case. Kristin, Kristin, I understand that we have to file an affirmative asylum application for Mac along at this point. Can you tell me where we are in that process?

Speaker 3 ([23:35](#)):

So the, you know, the affirmative application for asylum has been filed, um, as you know, over the summer, um, processing times are, you know, not, um, but it is important that we, you know, the office got it, got it in. Um, so right now it's a waiting game. Um, you know, at least we know it was receded. I know that was kind of, uh, giving us heartburn for a little bit when we weren't getting the receipt notices because that's proof that they receive application, you know, especially within that timeframe

Speaker 1 ([24:03](#)):

And the leads. What w what was the first thing you did with your brother when he got here? Was there anything special? You want it to show?

Speaker 2 ([24:10](#)):

I remember when he came over here, Nicola [inaudible], we met a lot of people, met a lot of good people that gave him some good, uh, uh, laptop school. And, uh, I think that was a good thing. Uh, Nicole did when he come over here and seeing a lot of people and getting some Gibbs from them, but gets around you get, we just went to the fail, you know, showing him the pug, you know,

Speaker 1 ([24:44](#)):

Is there anything that you would want other attorneys, or even non-attorneys who are listening to this, to know about your family story,

Speaker 2 ([24:54](#)):

Um, through the process, you know, it's kind of like complicated, not knowing what is really going outside. Other part of the wall are the process work. And a really stressful may remember him being in Kenya and [inaudible] being restricted not to leave the cam. If I leave the cam, I would be locked up. It was really one of the hardest thing I've ever experienced, you know, trying to leave in other countries as their foodie. And, um, even still under UN ACR, things were really tough. You know, it's like being a, you live in Phoenix. If you leave Phoenix, we're gonna log you up. You can go nowhere. You know, if you are the only to go somewhere, you have to go to school and go to a valley. If you're going to, to the hospital, which is the biggest hospital that you can be in a referred by the doctors, that's when you can leave the camp for the lawyers that are doing the job out here. I really thank them. It's really hard work. It's not an easy job. And, um, they just have to stay strong with whoever client they experience with who they're working with, because it's can be really distressful and can be really discouraging, like saying the case is taking over years, over years, nothing is coming out. And, um, with my experience with VAT, I will say, this is the best experience I've ever heard. You know, one year and everyone was going smooth. It's one of a kind experiment with the GT.

Speaker 1 ([26:40](#)):

There are a couple of things you'd like other people to know. One is to aware of what's going on in the rest of the world and how other people are suffering, great hardships that they could help out with. And two is to be patient with that help. And I think that you and your brother are probably two of some of the bravest people I've spoken to as well. And I'm going to now, I want to thank you for sharing your story with us. It's not always easy, but it's important in order to get other people to help, because there are millions of people around the world who need help like this, especially right now,

Speaker 2 ([27:17](#)):

Living in Kenya, who was, I believe, 15 years old when I was taking to save their facility by it's one organization called JRS, it's called refugee services. So I was over there by their care for over three years. And I remember literally we were 15 boys in that location out of 15 boys. I made it out with my brother to the United States. None of them came over here sometime I sit down and I put in myself, you know, this gotta be a blessing. You know, always with me, not letting me down. And the people I made are always a great people that, you know, never led me down, pushing my lap through. And, um, I think there has gotta be after me to protect my duties and do the good thing to the community. It's a lot of blessing. And, uh, I believe, uh, my brother got that little blessing, uh, to get an, a call to help him out. I will say we blessed. We're blessed to have good people. We blessed to be alive. You know,

Speaker 1 ([28:37](#)):

You've been listening to Greenberg Traurig, pro bono podcast. Good in practice. I'm your host, Caroline Heller, chair of Greenberg, char IX, global pro bono program and litigation shareholder in the New York office. On our show today, we had Nicole Goodwin, who is the managing shareholder of the Phoenix office. John Shumate, a corporate insecurities associate in the Phoenix office and Kristen NG, an immigration attorney in Greenburg, shrugs, Northern Virginia office. We also had Greenberg Charles client Molly talking about his brother Mac along and their journey. I hope you join us in two weeks for another pro bono story.