

# UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

SERIES 3 EPISODE 3

M♀I

@mothersinvent  

## [Theme Music]

- Thimali: Welcome to Season Three, Episode Three of Mothers of Invention everyone. I'm its series producer, Thimali Kodikara.
- Maeve: And I'm Maeve Higgins. I'm a comic, a writer and a college student, but I am not in a fraternity despite the fact that I'm kind of a bro *(laughs)*.
- Mary: And I am Mary Robinson. Former president of Ireland, Chair of the Elders and wait, did I hear you right Maeve? Did you say you're a student? A student of what exactly?
- Maeve: Yeah. I'm in grad school.
- Thimali: What?!
- Maeve: I'm doing a masters in international migration studies, Mary.
- Mary: Hmm, well.
- Maeve: Aren't you proud of me? I knew today's episode was on migration - So a year ago I decided I'd go to start going to college for it.
- Thimali: *(Laughs)*. Now that is dedication Maeve Higgins.
- Maeve: Thank you!
- Mary: Actually Maeve, I am quite impressed because I know you've been dealing with migration issues in New York. And when you've dealt with somebody practically, there's no harm in getting some study and learning how you should have done it properly.
- Maeve: *(Laughing)*. Yeah, exactly. The classes are all about me and the decisions I've made in my life. And they all end up with the professors saying 'you should never have come here Maeve. Why don't you stay in Cobh?!
- Thimali: *(Laughs)*.

Maeve: I do actually think that like one reason I started to get interested is because I do come from Cobh, which as Mary knows has a massive emigration history.

Mary: Oh it has a statue.

Mary: Of that young girl.

Maeve: Annie Moore?

Mary: Annie Moore. With her little brother.

Maeve: She has her two little brothers with her.

Mary: And they're looking towards the United States and in United States, when I was president, I unveiled the statue of Annie Moore on her own, looking as if she was going to take over America.

Thimali: Wait so there are two statues of Annie? One in Cobh where she set off, and another one where she landed in the States. That's so lovely.

Maeve: Yeah.

Thimali: So I guess she came through Ellis Island here in New York along with millions of other migrants in the late 1800's?

Maeve: That's right she was the first immigrant to pass through Ellis Island.

Mary: It's the only statue on Ellis Island.

Mary: And it's a lovely story, that when the ship had docked, there was an Austrian man, ahead of the queue and behind him was this 15 year old girl. And he said, 'Young lady, go before me'. And so she was the first to step down.

Maeve: You know, what, they were basically was undocumented because at that time you didn't need papers. So they were undocumented, they were minors, unaccompanied undocumented minors.

Thimali: Wow.

Maeve: Which is just who we see now at the border who get, you know, literally caged and often now, you know, separated from their families. But actually, as you said,

Annie Moore, there was this big fanfare when she arrived and I think it looked good to have this young, white girl, this kind of innocence, you know, to be the face of all of these arriving immigrants.

I think about her a lot too, and it's so incredible that you unveiled that statue, Mary, that's such an iconic..

Mary: - I did make a bit of a mistake. Cause you know, when you're president and you unveil a statue, nobody tells you for how long you can talk. And I really felt excited. So I said, it's wonderful to be unveiling this statue of a young woman, where else is there a woman statue? And people kind of looked around at the Statue of Liberty.

Thimali: *(Laughing)*.

Mary: It wasn't my finest moment. I have to say.

Thimali: *(Laughing)*. Oh my God, that's brilliant. Mary Robinson makes mistakes. Thank Goodness.

Mary: Don't worry. Lots of them!

Maeve: But I do think I'm very lucky to be here in New York and getting to study migration here because it's such an immigrant town, like there's people that are from all over the world who arrived in different waves.

Mary: Do you meet Syrian refugees?

Maeve: So I have met Syrian refugees, yes. And interviewed them and hung out with them. But there's just a tiny number here. I mean, when you think about the number of Syrians, yes displaced, yes it's a huge number. But at the same time, the only crisis I think is that Europe and the U.S. are having a moral crisis about what to do.

Mary: I see the link in our discussion on climate justice with the Syrian issue, because it was four years of terrible drought that started the internal movement that started an internal conflict. It's caused a huge outpouring of displacement and, sort of thinking about the neighboring countries, Lebanon, which is in such turmoil at the moment has so many Syrian refugees and they're so generous. What they say is, 'well, they are our neighbors', and, 'when they're displaced they become our guests'. I mean, it's, it's a completely different approach and we could learn a lot from it.

Maeve: Definitely.

**[Music Transition]**

Thimali: Right. I want everyone to have their journals to hand, plan a call with a bestie today or schedule a good walk outside in the sunshine. In our immigration episode this week, we're going in on some hard truths. We are, and always will be a show on solutions to the climate crisis. And we work so hard at digging up the most exciting solutions to cap or mitigate climate change. But it's important for all of us to understand that this late in the game, strategies to adapt to new landscapes are the only solutions left for people who stand on the border of living or dying. And this is already the situation for Black Brown and Indigenous peoples all over the world. Aside from the trauma of loss of home, we are talking about regular people who aren't considered a problem when they stay put, but when they relocate, they are too often dehumanized or considered less worthy of basic rights for the simple act of occupying safe space elsewhere.

Thimali: And if we look back on all our conversations in the last episode on colonization and reparations, we can understand why it is simply not right.

Maeve: Exactly. We want to believe that this will never happen to us, but without immediate action, climate migration and climate immigration will be the biggest human phenomenon of the 21st century.

Mary: Yes and I must say, I'm very grateful we're addressing this because by 2050, it's estimated there will be some 200 million climate change driven migrants around the world. Almost three quarters of those people will be from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Maeve: Yeah. I mean, we saw that, um, with the 2017, the central American migrant caravan, there were people trying to escape poverty and crime and drought - the effects of the 'dry corridor' which is a string of land that crosses the borders of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and I think Nicaragua.

Mary: Exactly. We absolutely cannot close our borders and quietly watch entire regions slowly suffer the wrath of

climate change from afar. It's inhumane to even consider it. Climate displaced communities are different from the individuals seeking asylum. They need their culture recognized, they need to be dealt with as a community, not as individual families and they need a different approach.

Thimali: Such an important point, Mary. So this week, we're going to look at migration as an adaptive solution. So this week we're talking to two brave women helping their communities say goodbye to their ancestral homes and to welcome in something new.

**[Music Transition]**

Thimali: Colette Pichon-Battle is the executive director of the [Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy](#) in South Louisiana USA, where coastal erosion is occurring at one of the fastest rates on the planet. She is a powerhouse of resilience. So please get humble and welcome Colette Pichon Battle.

Maeve: Hello, welcome!

Colette: Thank you.

Mary: Hi Colette, looking forward to talking with you.

Colette: Hi! Yes, me too!

Thimali: So I mean, you are born of the bayous of the South, which is just so romantic, like what's your personal connection to them? They're beautiful.

Colette: Yeah. The bayous are beautiful. I'm glad you said that. Sometimes I worry about people seeing the beauty of it. But it is. It's so gorgeous. Big, big trees and where we are, they're really old trees. Hundreds of years old, some of the trees existed before the country was here and they're still here. Cypress trees that are, you know, almost a thousand years old, right on riverbanks and water that looks muddy, but mostly it's clear water with a muddy bottom because we're at the sort of at the end of a large - one of the largest river systems of the US which is the Mississippi and everything down here was created by that.

Colette: So my mom's family is from here. They've been here since the 1770s but this area was controlled by both the French and the Spanish before the Americans

controlled it. So it's a very different feeling here. It's a place that has always been an intersection of different cultures, including native American or indigenous cultures, along with Spanish and French and American culture. So the languages here reflect that. Folks say our food is the best, but we've got the best of everybody's food.

You know what I mean? I want all y'all to come visit me. I want to be an old lady on a porch, in a shack in the Bayou!

Thimali: Yes!

Maeve: Oh I love it!

Thimali: Are you serving Gumbo? 'Cos I'm down. Jambalaya? Po'Boys?

Colette: Yes! Everything and moonshine.

Colette: You know what I mean? Don't forget to add the whiskey.

Thimali: Yes! Party at Colette's house! *(Laughs)*.

Mary: Colette, we know that after the terrible thing of Katrina, then you had the BP spill in 2010 and also you've had a number of other storms. So how do you build resilience? What do communities look like now after all this environmental disruption? And what are the challenges you face?

Colette: Since hurricane Katrina, the communities of the Gulf look weaker, they look devoid of a lot of their generational leadership. They are still 15 years later suffering from generational trauma on top of the most traumatic event that many of them have ever experienced, which was hurricane Katrina or the BP oil drilling disaster. But folks are trying to survive. Folks are trying to get back to a way of life that they know, and it's happening, but with a significant amount of the population in the region being new, these are not the same people. Many of the folks who were here during Katrina are not here anymore. It feels different. It looks different. The culture is not the same. It does not look like the same place, but it has all of the bricks and mortar - solutions that one would think of - new buildings, new roads but it's missing its soul.

Mary: And actually I heard about hurricane Katrina from Sharon Hanshaw.

Colette: Yes!

Mary: Oh! You know Sharon?

Colette: Oh, Absolutely. Anybody, anybody down here doing community work knows Miss Sharon.

Mary: Yeah. She had a salon in East Biloxi, which was a kind of center for women to come for their nails and their hair and all that. And her house was next door and both the house and the salon were completely destroyed and she became an accidental activist. She lived in a FEMA trailer and she organized her community.

Colette: She didn't just organize her community. She organized a lot of communities and she's in Mississippi, which is the state right next to mine. We were doing work across the coast. She's an amazing leader.

Colette: And I remember one gathering where she literally had folks coming in from Thailand who had gone through the tsunami and they came in and we were all dealing with destruction and rebuilding and it was, yeah, Sharon Hanshaw - amazing.

Maeve: After the devastation of the last few climate events, there's a big diaspora, people leaving spreading across 50 States. They're not climate refugees. They're more like climate migrants. Can you explain what the difference is and why it's important?

Colette: The bigger conversation around climate refugees and climate migrants is you have to understand that the word refugee is, it's a devalued word, right? It's a word that has a particular connotation to it.

Mary: But it's also a legally protected word.

Colette: It's also a legally protected word internationally and in the U.S. so the refugees have particular rights and a particular kind of legal status but it means you have crossed an international border. In Louisiana, while people were in fact crossing state borders from Louisiana into Texas or Louisiana into Tennessee, they didn't cross an international border.

Colette: And so it was a, you know, a synonym that was an incorrect use, but the intention was clear. These are outsiders. These are not our people. So these were climate migrants, we are climate migrants. And if you use the term climate migration, it can encompass refugees. If you use the word refugees, it excludes climate migrants who did not cross an international border.

Thimali: Right.

Maeve: Even hearing you, you know, with your American accent saying like we are climate migrants, it's really powerful.

Colette: But what, but what's happening is, in South Louisiana and in Florida, I have to say, we are in, what's called a conservative States, deep Republican territory with people whose talking points of their party, tell them to deny climate change. However, in their home States, they're actually having to deal with the impacts of sea level rise at the very least, if not acknowledging the more frequent and more extreme storms and weather are also part of it. So these States are having to deal with climate impacts while the representation is denying climate change.

Thimali: I wanted to just readdress the immigration migration issue because both are happening across the U.S. right now. So how, how is that playing out actually?

Colette: Yeah. Thank you for that question. I was practicing in immigration when this happened, the strange information I have about immigration and migration and disaster. I mean only really the Lord could put that together. In the aftermath of Katrina, my role was to do some support for immigrants who were seeking their pay. They were brought in, to the disaster zone by some of the largest - I'm going to call them war and reconstruction contractors.

- And they brought in massive groups of immigrants. So the misunderstanding was that the immigrants that were here in the Gulf coast were 'illegal' - That's how they call immigrants who have come across the border without papers, which is also incorrect - A person cannot be illegal. But anyway, they brought in, folks lawfully. But those visas say, as soon as you lose your job, you lose your status. But then when they wanted their pay, they didn't want to pay them. So my job was to maintain their immigration status while other organizers were helping



them to advocate for their pay. And so what I got to see was who was here - it was immigrants from Peru, Brazil, the women were coming from the Caribbean. The immigrants that they were bringing in were highly skilled craft folks.

But one beautiful thing that I remember in my hometown was one night, there was a Holy day. So there are a lot of Catholic folks down here, and somebody made a bonfire and got some beer. And I remember these folks who were from Peru, it was a Holy day for them too. And they were walking by and you know, we just called them over and nobody could communicate.

Mary: *(Laughs).*

Colette: *(Laughs).* Nobody knew Spanish. There was no communication here, but there was, 'here's a beer and here's some food'.

Thimali: Yeah! The universal language.

Colette: The universal language.

Mary: And what kind of legal battles were you able to enter into to try and help this?

Colette: Some of the legal challenges that I'm seeing now are actually around, holding your land, right? So you've had to go away, you've been displaced for 15 years, but you still own property here. That property is about to go to the sea - in the next 50 to 75 years your land may not be here. What does that mean for you? What are your legal rights? What do you do? Do you leave now? Do you get bought out when your property is worth zero? That's the kind of stuff where we're seeing now. I talked to a lot of law students, who are trying to figure out their role in this climate movement. And I will tell you, the law has a role for sure, and it's not written yet. The law for this reality is not written yet.

Mary: I've said this before the law is behind the curve on reality.

Colette: The law is always reactionary. And so it will never be in front of the curve.

Mary: Yeah. At the international level, there's a lot of talk about loss and damage as being the way to now look at where something like land disappearing because of the

slow, rising tide coming in. Do you talk about loss and damage at all?

Colette:

We do. Loss and damage is one of those terms that's really used at the international level. And we talk about it because we participate in the Conference of Parties (COP) that happens every year, which are the climate talks. So we generally like to bring a delegation from the Gulf into those talks, because most people don't even think about the climate impacts in the United States, right? It's sort of like climate change is for all of the other countries, but not the United States. No it's happening here. And we bring a delegation to those spaces.

I live in the U.S. South and the U.S. South, it's got the largest black population in the United States. It's got the highest level of income insecurity and poverty in the United States. We are the third world section of this first world nation. So we are living realities, akin to folks in the global South, but we are part of this nation that is responsible for so much damage on the planet. So what is our role? It turns out that our global South brothers and sisters have told us our role is to press and push our nation to pay for the loss and damages around the globe. And their role is to help us seek our own climate justice within our nation as a part of a global society. So that's how we get into the loss and damage conversation. And it will be one of the main legal fights, I believe, of our time.

Mary:

Good.

Thimali:

I know that you worked doing federal recognition of tribes. That's enormous. Disaster recovery policy by suing the federal government. That's enormous. The right to migrate is enormous as well. Could you talk through those specific things? Cause they're, they're pretty critical.

Colette:

Yeah. You know, I'm so glad you're putting these together because, in 2006, when we started connecting these dots, people thought we were crazy. Like, what does Katrina have to do with immigration? Or what does climate have to do with immigration? And I did not wake up with this idea. You start understanding the story of the tribes in the Gulf South and you understand, not only have they just gone through Katrina, but they cannot fully recover or get particular dollars from the federal government because they don't have federal recognition.

Colette: Now, this became really clear during the BP oil drilling disaster because they started spraying dispersants, that by the way, were banned in Europe for being carcinogenic and harmful to human health. They banned them in Europe, but sprayed them on the marsh and water right on the coast which is where we get our crabs, our shrimp, a lot of our fish. This is a very rich ecosystem and a lot of the folks who live on the coast are these tribes. So when the tribe wanted to say to the U.S. government who was negotiating with BP and all of these other folks, we don't want this sprayed on us. They had no right to speak.

Colette: And so federal recognition became a necessary tactic in order for us to reach that, that shared vision of climate justice.

Colette: This one tribe that we work with, the Houma nation, there's a whole city called 'Houma Louisiana' named after this tribe but the federal government doesn't recognize the people. So the state recognizes the people, everybody in Louisiana knows the Houma nation. Like how do you not? They're huge. It's a huge tribe. That nation is sitting on top of oil and gas reserves in South Louisiana. They're not recognizing that tribe until that tribe gives up their oil and gas rights, gives up their rights to casinos. And who would, who would agree to that? And then who needs to be recognized by the federal government anyway, that's what a lot of these tribes are turning toward, which is 'we don't recognize the United States on our territory. How about that?'

Maeve: I'm sure you've, you know, there's a election coming up (*laughs*). So we're hearing about these policies and I wonder how you feel about that. And, you know, if you think is it people that need to get more engaged? Like where are you at right now?

Colette: This election is crucial for the United States and for the world, we are either going to emerge into a new intention around democracy, or we are going to fall into an authoritarian rule and all of our systems are going to collapse. There is a lack of leadership everywhere, not just at the top. There's a lack of courage in our political system right now, across the board. The systems that exist are being challenged by the people in the streets saying, 'take it all down', right. That was the theme of '#TakeEmDownNOLA' like about those statutes, 'take them down'. The theme of the movement for black lives

is to defund and divest and reinvest in things that help us. This is a challenge to the economic system of this country. This moment is a challenge to the political system of this country and unfortunately, and I say this with love to my fellow Americans, we have been so privileged as Americans that we've fallen asleep at the wheel of democracy. We've forgotten what our duty is to maintain this vision and to advance this dream of achieving a democracy and my hope is that folks will wake up enough to engage in this election.

Thimali: Where do you see hope for regenerative future? What's the vision? How do we get to it?

Colette: The first step of the journey is really acknowledging that we all carry trauma, that we all advance systems rooted in trauma, that we are part of a system that hurts people. We're part of privilege that is taken from others so that we can have what we need. We, you have to acknowledge that, or else you'll start making solutions that only cause more harm. This is not just about understanding carbon emissions and greenhouse gas emissions and parts per billion. Although regular people have got to understand the science behind this thing. But there's a spiritual piece to this as well, which has to do with our relationship to land and nature that has been taken from us.

Colette: So I think that the second phase is really around preparedness and preparedness is a good place to learn about the science and the impacts as well. I think the third piece is really gonna be around relocation. The science tells us that particular parts of land, especially in South Louisiana are going to be lost. There's nothing we can do about it, including my community, right. For the first time, since this country was invaded by Europeans, for the first time, there'll be massive amounts of people who need to decide where and how to settle. What about looking at the opportunity to figure out how people can move in a way that is dignified, that is autonomous and self-determined? I think there's some opportunity here.

And then I think we get to the next phase after that, which is how do we build on those places where we're going? Community controlled energy grids, community controlled water and management systems, community, and local controlled food systems. These things, if put in place at a societal level, give us both resilience and the ability to sustain and regenerate and do that creative building in the future - not just for climate, but for the

root causes of climate change, which are racism, capitalism, greed, oppression.

You gotta be on the street now saying that Black Lives Matter. You gotta be out there saying that women have a right to equal pay. You have to be out there saying queer liberation is everybody's liberation. If you're not saying those things, you're not in the climate justice fight.

***[Music Transition]***

Maeve:

Thank you so much for coming Collette and for folks at home, who don't know, behind the scenes at Mothers of Invention, we're connecting all the mothers we've featured on the show to each other. So they're sharing news resources, playlists, ideas, funding opportunities with each other to keep this global community growing. So please do stay in touch with Colette. And thank you so much for today.

Thimali:

Such a joy to have you!

Colette:

Thank you!

***[Music Transition]***

Thimali:

I've got a special treat for you both this week, Mary and Maeve. Fatima from [Green New Deal UK](#) and [Build Back Better](#), who we heard from in [Episode One](#) has sent us a soundscape from London. London doesn't have a strict lockdown anymore, so let's find out where she goes for some respite.

***[Fatima-Zarah Ibrahim Soundscape Audio]***

***[Bird sounds, traffic, leaves rustling].***

Fatima:

I'm recording this from my hometown in Harrow, in Northwest London, my lockdown refuge. It's at the top of a Hill, a wooded Hill, known as Harrow on the Hill, and it took me years to discover how to get up here. But I found there's this small path that leads you through the woods. And when you get to the top, there is a beautiful church, the most stunning church, and on the edge of the church grounds, there is a small perch. And if you climb upon it, you get the most extraordinary view of London.

Fatima: A lot has changed. There's definitely a lot more sounds now, not just of nature, but cars and people talking and construction. But it's still really beautiful. The other thing that has changed about this space is the hedges have grown wildly out of control. The wild flowers have bloomed and that's because the gardeners who manage the space have also been in lockdown. There's lots of bees and butterflies, squirrels and all sorts of birds that I wish I could identify.

**[Soundscape ends]**

Maeve: Oh, that's beautiful. I'm really glad she battled her hay fever and gave us that little window *(laughs)*. I can't believe that is London. It sounded like the countryside.

Thimali: It did, didn't it? she said, it's interesting. You could hear construction happening in the background because you could already hear the city going back to work.

Maeve: Yeah That's certainly isn't the butterflies using jackhammers. Those little guys! *(Laughs)*.

Mary: But I do know what Fatima is talking about as there are so many people who are noticing in lockdown, that nature is coming back and birds are singing. In fact, I've been told in Dublin that we're hearing more bird sounds in lockdown or were in the strict lockdown, because birds could hear each other. So the bird sound was much louder because they actually were talking to each other and hearing each other

Maeve: Yeah.

Mary: And enjoying each other and singing to each other. I thought that was a really nice touch.

**[Music Transition]**

Thimali: So Mary, I'm going to hand off the introductions to our second guest to you because she is no ordinary mother.

Mary: No, she's not any ordinary mother. This week's guest is my very dear friend or Ursula Rakova. She's the executive director of Tulele Peisa, a nonprofit formed by the Elders of the Carteret Islands in Melanesia. They are helping local people relocate to mainland Papua New Guinea. My foundation was supporting their fantastic work wholeheartedly and Ursula can move a room when she talks about the situation and what she is doing and

what it means. And I'm really delighted to see you again, Ursula.

Thimali: So happy to meet you Ursula.

Ursula: Hi there. Lovely to meet you all.

Maeve: Yeah. Welcome. Thanks for coming. And we always know when it's a friend of Mary's on the show because her voice totally changes and this mischief comes back around and I feel like you two have gotten into some trouble in the past together. Am I right?

Thimali: *(Laughs).*

Mary: Not bad trouble. What do you think, Ursula?

Ursula: Nah not trouble but - we've been really the best of friends.

Thimali, Maeve: Aww.

Thimali: Ursula, I just wanted to help everyone at home understand where you are. So Papua New Guinea is a string of islands north of Australia and west of Indonesia. But you're speaking to us today from Bougainville island which is a nearby province of Papua New Guinea. But you actually in fact live 53 miles away by boat on the nearby Carteret Islands where your peoples are. And it's an 'atoll' which is a tiny ring of islands formed on the rim of an underwater volcano. Which just sounds magical!

But what also jumped out at me about your home was the fact that it's a matriarchal society!

Ursula: You know women were always respected. Men have g, the physical strength. So men are warriors but women are actually in the back making decisions and men will orate that decision.

Ursula: Women in Bougainville are highly respected. It's because of the concept that's influenced from the Western, from outside, they talk about equal participation and all that. We always had equal participation. It was always there

Maeve: We can Google and look at pictures and it looks so beautiful. Could you describe to us what the islands are like and then the challenges that you face?

Ursula: The islands, you know, it's heaven on earth. It's Paradise. But this paradise is also not helping because shoreline erosion is really fast. Frequent storms surges, right now, you know, that boats cannot come from the Island to mainland Bougainville because of the storms, it's really rough and so this is a continuous issue.

Mary: Yeah. I remember you telling me Ursula that Tulele Peisa means '*Sailing the waves on our own*'.

Mary: The Carteret Islanders are being described as among the first Island communities in the world to organize a relocation due to climate change.

Ursula: Yeah. Basically in 2005, we started discussions. In 2006. We actually got some, some of our own fundraising. And then in 2007, we registered Tulele Peisa as an organization to put in it, the relocation of the Carteret Islanders. And we actually had to fight against a lot of criticisms, where some of the government officials were saying that we will try not take the responsibility away from the government, but we also saw that it's an advantage taking some of the responsibilities away from government so that we are really also relieving the government to look at other issues as well. And so this is why we got organised.

Mary: And I remember you telling me about bringing some people to Bougainville. Can you talk about that too, to meet you? You bought land there didn't you?

Ursula: The land was gifted to us by the, Catholic Church in Bougainville.

Ursula: We've only managed to move 10 families who are now sustaining their lives. We've got four more sites to move people to, but It's been very slow. We have not had recognition, from our own government. And that's why this has taken such a long time. But we would like to move 140 families more. We are living with a population of 1000 people that will relieve the islands from, you know, human pressure.

Thimali: What do you hope to actually provide them with?

Ursula: We are giving them a hectare of land that is really, really big compared to the purchase or parcels of land they have on the Island. And they are able to grow a variety of garden fruit. They are able to grow cash crops like cocoa.



Maeve: That's so cool to hear that because I know that it was, so it was getting more difficult to grow crops on the Island and then fishermen couldn't rely, it wasn't safe. They had to go out and deeper. So to be now on its safe parcel of land and able to grow your own crops. It's so empowering. I think that's incredible the work you're doing.

Mary: Ursula, I remember you using a phrase I've often quoted you on this, where you said, 'there's nothing I can do about the fact that we have to leave the land of the bones of our ancestors'. Tell me about that cultural point.

Ursula: Culturally, we are connected to that land. We have our forefathers, our ancestors, buried on the island. And it's not easy getting up and moving to another place. And so we have to perform feasts just before we move families so that everybody comes and they all have a share of the feast and so they also talk to the ancestors to tell them that they have to move because it's not them wanting to move it, something else forcing them to move.

Thimali: I've spoken to lots of global climate leaders for the show over the last two years. But something I noticed quite quickly was that the first concern for a lot of global South leaders was saving culture and heritage and ancestry. But I don't think that's something that many people in the global North can relate to Ursula because we generally migrate by choice. So how are families making the decision to stay or go in the Carterets and how are you helping to preserve Carteret culture in Bougainville?

Ursula: The Elders have to select the families that move in because, on mainland Bougainville, you know, things grow really fast. And if you, physically, you are not fit to work, then it's best you don't move because you will not work the land. One hectare of land is quite big.

Ursula: One of the things we want to do, and we want to continue to do is to keep inviting our elders to come in. And we want to build a cultural structure that will basically signify the kind of a big house that we have - or cultural house - that we have on the Island. So each of the clans on the Island have their own house but this house will be built of sago leaves and coconut palms.

Mary: Well, it's just so nice to have been able to listen to you again, Ursula, and let's not leave it so long next time, let's try and keep in touch. I know you still come sometimes, don't you? To climate meetings, and your story is very inspiring and it's great to see that you continue and solve problems and help your communities and they contribute greatly to Bougainville.

Ursula: Thank you so much. Thanks. Mary, it's been really nice seeing you again

Thimali: Thank you so, so much.

**[Music Transition]**

Thimali: Yeah, this whole conversation keeps making me think of the International Center for Climate Change and Development in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They've of course seen horrific floods and coastal erosion over the years, but now are receiving thousands of Rohingya Muslim migrants escaping Myanmar too.

The center is working to set up a fund for climate safe, migrant friendly towns inland. But the cherry on top? They've drafted programs to help prepare locals in those towns, so Bangladeshi residents will be able to help migrants adapt to their new homes and feel welcome. It's just amazing.

Maeve: That is amazing, like how do we get the U S to do the same? I think it sounds like when we were speaking to Colette earlier it's policy, but it's also some kind of movement of spirits, right. To be welcoming and to see the kind of shared, you know, humanity that we all have.

Mary: But the interesting thing is we come learn a very important lesson from the way people are responding to COVID-19 because we're seeing neighborliness. We're all affected, we're all suffering a bit and that brings out an empathy and we need that empathy and that solidarity. So I think that's a pretty good note to end this episode with, you Thimali. So well done. And what's coming up next week? You're the boss.

Thimali: Yay! Mary Robinson seal of approval. Well, our next episode is on agriculture. So given the immigration and migration crises, we're going to take a look at the most exciting solutions for food security in vulnerable regions.

And it's going to be a fascinating insight into the ways communities are combining ancient and modern farming practices to be able to stay home, which is where they want to be.

**[Music Transition]**

Maeve: But before we sign off, we have a nice surprise for everybody. We've been collecting self care strategies from every mother we speak to this season. So if you want to know how to stay sane in a mega crisis, jump on to Instagram for some behind the scenes viewing as they share their best tips. And of course you can keep sending us your soundscapes at [mothersofinvention.online/contribute](https://mothersofinvention.online/contribute). We'll see you very soon.

**[Music Transition]**

Mary: Mothers of Invention is brought to you by Vulcan productions and Doc Society. Our series producer, our boss, is Thimali Kodikara. Our plate spinning development producer is Shanida Scotland and our Minisodes producer with all the jokes is India Rakusen.

Maeve: Our editor is Sefa Nkyi and you can't stop her because she's on fire. Our sound designer Axel Kacoutié is very talented.

Thimali: Better get out of the way. Rebecca Lucy mills is Britain's best line producer and she's coming for you. Our engineer, Lisa hack is back from holiday and looking good.

Mary: Our social media strategist is Imriel Morgan for Content is Queen. Our partnerships lead is Micha Nestor, and Aisha Younis manages our satellite project Climate Reframe for BAME climate leaders in the UK.

Maeve: The executive producers Jody Allen, Ruth Johnston, Matt Milios, Jess Search and Beadie Finzi are still very clever people. Team Vulcan is Andrea Dramer, Susan Grella, Kimberly Nyhous, Alex Pearson & Ted Richane.

Thimali: Ursula's audio was recorded in Buka town, on Bougainville Island by Aloysius Laukai Our theme tune was written by Jamie Perrera and we are very proudly distributed by PRX.

*[End of Episode].*