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INTEGRATING LAW AND CLIMATE ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE - AN INTERVIEW WITH GLENN MEIER, JD

By Maria Jose Anitua, ABG

Maria: What would you highlight as the most important thing about your experience in the EHC project?

Glenn: The most important thing about my experience in the EHC project was the ability to see Collaborative Law in action and how it immediately opens doors for high-impact, positive, change. By applying Collaborative Law principles to meet the housing needs of refugees, the scope of the opportunity expanded to include climate considerations and general consumption/ reuse practices. I've always said that to create a "bigger pie" in conflict management, we need to expand Collaborative Practice, and EHC is a living, breathing example of that idea.

Maria: Do you think the legal system in housing leasing needs to change?

“The traditional legal system presumes all relationships are adversarial, so participants must regard each other as adversaries.”

Glenn: Well, the legal system needs to change in lots of areas! My focus is on creating spaces in the law for approaches that consider the underlying relationships involved. The traditional legal system presumes all relationships are adversarial, so participants must regard each other as adversaries. That gives them minimal options for creative problem-solving when things go wrong or when people disagree. EHC is a magnificent example of applying the relational approach to housing leasing, where people aren't presumed to be adversaries. It allows parties to a legal agreement to develop a relationship to help them work through any bumps they encounter. EHC shows that concept works!

Maria: Is the topic timely?

Glenn: There couldn't be a more appropriate moment for a robust expansion of Collaborative legal practices. Our societies feel like they're constantly being pulled apart. While there's no single cause for that problem, it doesn't help that our approach to formal dispute resolution is based



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on treating each other like enemies. There is no better time for lawyers to expand their role as creative, collaborative, problem solvers

Maria: Do you sense there may be many ways for Collaborative lawyers and other professionals to contribute to climate action by helping to re-use vacant housing different from EHC, and the digital platform?

Glenn: The original EHC pilot project demonstrated that you don't need a digital platform to apply Collaborative Law to repurpose vacant housing. While a platform to scale the process is beneficial, smaller-scale efforts can generate significant momentum. In our EHC research we found examples of repurposing vacant residential properties for things like community centers. What Collaborative lawyers should keep in mind is that any legal use for a vacant property helps. Filling empty homes helps the climate.

Maria: What do you see as the main barriers, and what are the main opportunities?

Glenn: Collaborative professionals know that the key to successful Collaborative Practice is committing to the mindset shift from adversarial to collaborative thinking. They also know making that shift is hard. EHC shows what happens when you make it; your ability to find creative answers grows. So, the ability of Collaborative professionals, including Collaborative lawyers, to make that shift is both the main barrier and the main opportunity.

