

Kari Kammel “ON A GLOBAL JOURNEY FROM RULE OF LAW TO BRAND PROTECTION”



Leah Evert-Burks: This is Leah Evert-Burks with the Center for Anti-Counterfeiting and Product Protection @ Michigan State University and *this is Brand Protection Stories* – stories about the practice of brand protection by those who live it.

Leah Evert-Burks: For the August installment we decided to take an opportunity to introduce the BPS community to the new A-CAPP Director.

Leah Evert-Burks: Kari Kammel has been Assistant Director of Outreach for A-CAPP since 2015. In that role, she has been responsible for the Center’s education programming, including executive education, the professional certificate in brand protection, the Center’s student internship program and student placement. She also heads outreach to brand protection stakeholders for the Center. During her tenure, Kari has maintained an active research agenda on legal issues pertaining to trademark counterfeiting, U.S. state and federal law, e-commerce and social media liability for trademark counterfeiting, public international and intellectual property legal issues, and the impact of culture in the Middle East on intellectual property and trademark enforcement. She has testified before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee based on her research. Kari is a licensed attorney in Illinois and Michigan with a J.D. from DePaul University, a Master’s Degree in Political Science from the American University in Cairo, and a Bachelor of Art’s degree from the University of Chicago. Kari now takes over the helm of the A-CAPP Center as Director. Her appointment was recently announced to high praise from all sectors of the brand protection community and those who have had the pleasure to work with Kari over the years. Accordingly, I wanted to take the time to introduce Kari to our *Brand Protection Stories* podcast listeners and provide the opportunity for her to discuss her unique background and her vision for the A-CAPP Center.

Leah Evert-Burks: Welcome to *Brand Protection Stories*, Kari.

Kari Kammel: Thanks, Leah. Great to be here.

Leah Evert-Burks: As with many of us, you have a unique journey that ultimately brought you to brand protection. We talk about brand protection as multi-disciplined and requiring many skill sets. And, Kari, you have those in spades. So let’s spend some time today to talk about your unique background. Your story. There’s many places to start when looking at your bio, but I’d like to start specifically prior to your coming to the A-CAPP Center you spent a significant time working, traveling,

and living in the Middle East, including Egypt, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Libya, Jordan, and others. Can you talk about that?

Kari Kammel: Sure so again, thank you for the invitation to have this discussion. And you know I'd like to bring a little bit more of a background and sort of give a full colored picture of this, as you know, all of our resumes are just you know a couple of words and some some duties on on paper. But the the story behind all of it is always hopefully a little bit more exciting as it probably is in my case. The most recent set of experiences I had in the Middle East were my first job at Michigan State which was a Middle East Program Manager. So I was responsible for recruiting companies and organizations in the Middle East, who were mid-career usually, or beginning of advanced career, and bringing them back to MSU for short, what we might call executive education experiences. So I customized those programs. I got to learn a lot of different programs across campus. But you may ask, how did I end up with that position to begin with? In the position I had prior to that was in Iraq which a lot of people are surprised when I when I say that because now I've been at MSU for 10 years and haven't, haven't been living in the Middle East for that long. So maybe I take a couple of steps back.

Leah Evert-Burks: Please, do.

Kari Kammel: So I and I haven't I really don't share my personal story, very much in the business setting. But I grew up in a multicultural family. My mom was from the Michigan area and had up and had family, you know, in the area going back a couple 100 years. You know, tracing, tracing her ancestry, you know, across to New England, and then back to actually England and France. And then my dad was from Southern Egypt. So he was one of the oldest in a very large family who had studied engineering and had a dream to to create and invent and sort of go beyond the borders of his small town. Which he did, he ended up you know, traveling the many countries living in Germany, and then eventually coming to the US and eventually the mid-Michigan. So I grew up in mid-Michigan in this very multicultural family. With, you know, very, very different world viewpoints, very different cultures. Some similarities, of course, maybe in around values and things like that. But I learned very early that not everybody communicates in the same way. We all have very similar interests and values, but you know our our flavor for life is a little bit different. And growing up in that environment I learned how to navigate that between my parents, but also between their respective families, which were very different, as you can imagine. We always joked on my dad's side it was like the United Nations, because all of his brothers and sisters had married, you know, people from all over the world from Germany, from Korea you know, and so on. So when we got together there wasn't even one uniform language that we all spoke we would all be translated amongst each other, or in some cases pantomiming, and I mean if we could, we couldn't quite navigate the languages. But that brought my interest, you know, one growing up in, I grew up in a rural Michigan out in the country - but this curiosity for this whole other side of my life. So when I went to

undergrad, I went to University of Chicago, and I said, I wanna be an archaeologist, and I'd watched Indiana Jones a few too many times, but this is so interesting I still absolutely love history and the study of archaeology and anthropology, and the study of like humans from 2,000, 4,000, 6,000 years ago and this realization that we're the same as we were you know 2, 4,000 years ago we just have new technologies and different clothes in different settings. But we have the same dreams, the same passions, the same fears, which was something that was always fascinating to me. And then somewhere in that journey at University of Chicago, I realized Oh, I probably won't make a lot of money doing this. Maybe I should you know think about that. I had been studying formal Arabic, so I had learned Arabic like the colloquial dialect, the Egyptian dialect as a kid. So I thought I would study this, and this was pre-September 11th. Also I took some ancient languages just for fun, cause I was like, oh, this would be interesting to read ancient Coptic which was really hard, much harder than I expected. And I ended up being the only undergrad in that class and woo that kicked my butt. But I learned I was a lot and I, I shifted more towards modern studies, modern Middle East studies, which was fascinating. I learned in, I took a class in the spring of 2001 right before I graduated on Islamic terrorism and fundamentalism. Which talked about, you know these trends, and what was what was happening in the Middle East, and then I graduated, and a few months later I got my first job in downtown Chicago in a law firm, because I decided I wanted to be a lawyer and September 11th happens, and it was unbelievable to watch that play out as an American. But with someone with a Middle Eastern background.

Leah Evert-Burks: Right.

Kari Kammel: But I mean the absolute horror and fear. One as an American to see that happening. But then some of the backlash that happened against Arab Americans. I have been the president of the Arab Students Union at the University of Chicago, and I started getting questions about my activity around that which for me was was pretty much a social cultural event. But also I mean some, some politics about what was going on in the Middle East at the time, and I realized I really liked law at that point. But September 11th had really sort of changed things for me in my mind. I was one of, you know, few people graduating at the time that had Arabic language skills, and there was a lot of effort, you know, to recruit for for some of the US work that was gonna be happening in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and I, I didn't feel I was ready for that but I said, I think I need to dig deeper into this. So I worked at another law firm, switched for a bit, and then decided you know, I think I'm gonna get my master's degree. So I applied to all these great programs in the US. You know, a lot of the big schools in Middle East studies, and I got into a whole bunch of them, and I had forgotten that one of the schools I had applied to was the American University in Cairo, in Egypt. And I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to actually go there to my dad's homeland. Where I any any kid of an Egyptian father has recognized in some way what they would call Egyptian citizenship. Doesn't mean you have a passport, or anything, it's just, it's given

through lineage so I said I've been there for vacation but maybe I'll go there and live for a while, and actually really dive deep into this culture that I've had my toes in but not really much more than that. But I still like law, so what am I gonna do? How am I gonna figure this out? So all these other programs that apply to were Middle Eastern Studies Masters. And I got into the Middle Eastern Studies Program in the American University in Cairo, which is one of the you know, one of the highest liberal arts schools in the Middle East region next to like the AUB in Beirut. I got there and I got into my program and it was all Americans and a couple Europeans there to study Middle East programs, and I was like, I don't think this is really what I want. So I went to the register's office and said, Do you have any other programs? You know I already got into this one I've moved here, I'm here, and they said, well, we have this program in International Human Rights law. It's it's still under this Political Science umbrella, and I said, law- I don't even really know what human rights law is but thought is but great, and they said, Well, do you have any legal background? I said I worked at two firms in downtown Chicago, and they're like, Okay, you could go in the program. So I sort of fell into it learning a lesson that my dad had taught me, that I still adhere to, which is always ask, you never know what's the worst that someone's gonna say is no. But if you never ask you'll never hear yes.

Leah Evert-Burks: Right.

Kari Kammel: Because you'll never have taken that opportunity.

Leah Evert-Burks: Those questions will lead you so, and it sounds like it did.

Kari Kammel: And always seeing what doors open up. I feel that a lot of my life I've tried to plan, but a lot of it has just been fate opening up before me. So I ended up in Egypt, I ended up in a Human Rights Law Program. I met some of the most unbelievable people in my program. Many were Egyptian, many more from sub-Saharan Africa, you know a few were from other areas in Asia. People who had very different life experiences than me. But that were incredible, and we were all there because it was this interesting, you know, concept of, how can we treat other humans, especially within our own jurisdictions, with a base level of humanity? And what is that? The right to water, the right to political freedom, the right to the freedom of religion, the right to bodily autonomy. You know all of these things, and it was so fascinating to hear these different cultures. You know, relate to that. There were a couple of Americans in my program as well, and we all, you know, we all really connected on this level, and a lot of them now are doing amazing things within the human rights field still. Whether they're prosecutors before the International Criminal Court or running Human Rights Watch, or the International Committee of the Red Cross. That group of colleagues of mine are are still doing incredible things. So I spent that you're working with a lot of NGOs in Egypt, on the grounds, you know activity. I also taught high school for a year. So I'll just say the high schoolers taught me a lot of swear words that I had never learned at home, which was fun. I could coached the girls' soccer team, which was in itself a very

interesting experience, because I had been a soccer and rugby player in high school and college to so that was also very fascinating. I learned to scuba dive. And got my my scuba diving license. So it was an incredible year and then an incredible three years, actually. So at the end of it I said what am I gonna do? I guess I have to go back to the US. Maybe I can stay. I'm not sure. Had a couple of job offers in Egypt, and thought no, it's time for me to go back home. So I went back to Chicago. Spent a little time in Michigan again, and said, what do I do with this master's degree? I don't know much, I can do with it and one of my mentors back from Egypt was a professor at De Paul in Chicago, and said, I think maybe you should get your JD. I said JD? Oh that's expensive. That's a lot of time I just spent two and a half years getting this master's degree and he said that you know the important thing for JD is it's the skill set and it's this way of thinking about problems, he said. I think you have a good good set for it, but you need to discipline yourself and go through this, and it's hard. A lot of It's just grueling like getting through it and being able to discipline yourself, to study and to do that. So I took the plunge went the law school with probably a different mindset, though, than my colleagues. You know a lot of them were set corporate law, I'm gonna do you know trial litigation. I wanna do this. And I was really still pulled towards international law. But I had a lot of other interest, too, so I was really interested in health law, health care law, health law, a lot of things around mental health. And I, I did a lot at that time about the Iraq War and and mental health issues both from a soldier perspectives, but also from Iraqis that had been living through decades of war. I was really active, of course, in the international human rights law program, because that's what I had done for my Masters, which was always very fascinating for me, and I also took a lot of intellectual property and criminal law classes, because I thought man that's interesting. I couldn't do patents because I didn't have a hard science background. But I took international IP. I took trademarks and copyrights. Little did I know that that would be helpful years down the road. And I spent a summer at the Cook County State Attorney's Office, doing long term narcotics investigations. I thought I wanted to be a prosecutor that's what I'll do. And then, after a summer of that I said I like this intellectually but I don't think I can, it's not for me to do day in and day out. But I was still, I was very curious about that that aspect of things. So I graduated from law school, and I graduated in spring of 2008, and, as you may remember, that was you know the economic crisis hit. All of us have, you know, more or less been promised these high paying jobs after graduation, and all of a sudden nobody had jobs. Everybody's offers were rescinded, we're studying for the bar, and nobody, none of my friends, even the people that were in the top 5% of the class were we're getting offers at the time, so I didn't know what to do. Everybody was applying for waiting, waiting tables, bartending, any job they could possibly get, just to, just to pay the bills. And then my law school called back and the International Human Rights Institute, which is where I had done a lot of my student work and have gotten scholarships and fellowships, and been very active in and they said we have this role for in a Deputy Executive Director position, you know,

would you like it? And I said I, I don't even know what that means like? Why would I work in education? I'm not an academic you know I think I'd rather do some kind of practice or go back overseas. You know this is these are the things you do, you'd work with students. You do some practical education with them, you get to create and run some of our events, our global events, you get to write some publications, you get to teach some classes in the law school. I said I guess I'll take this for a year this door is opening up for me. Let's see, let's see what it brings so I started that job. And you might hear some echoes of what I do for A-CAPP in that in that early job, in my first academic job. So I managed the law students, who went on, of course, to do a lot of incredible things in international law, a lot of them. You know, met heads of State and got to host and run these events on really critical international human rights law issues. You know got to understand a lot of how you know diplomacy works between countries because we did a lot of work with Diplomats, with Ministers of Justice, you know, with with a all of these other you know, types of groups within the legal profession, and I did that for a while. And it was interesting, and at the time we were also a Department of State Grant recipient. So the Institute did a lot of Department of State work. So some of the early work was focused around, as you might imagine, rule of law, so not necessarily pure international human rights, but rule of law. So what I would call the modern term for nation building, because I guess nation building was not so, the term was not, you know, as as okay as it once had been, but rule of law. So helping a country to, you know, create that rule of law structure so that it's something that can be relied on by its citizens, by its government, by other governments, to make a more stable environment and region. And, as you can imagine, given my background and the background of the Institute we were doing a lot in the Middle East at the time. So Afghanistan was one of the places we had been working. Where we had a lot of of our partners, who were judges and lawyers going into to do trainings of of their judges to rebuild courthouses or build courthouses for the first time, and then, you know that had been going on since soon after September 11th, and then by 03 and 04, with the US invasion of Iraq. We had moved into Iraq. So we were getting a lot of democracy and rule of law, which is part of the State Department grants to do work in country. And my boss at the time said, we need a new director for one of our programs in Iraq. I think you'd be great, just like hmm Iraq, no thanks. Egypt sure, I'll go back to Egypt anytime. I'll go back to scuba diving and camping in the desert, and you know all the fun things like.

Leah Evert-Burks: But Iraq?

Kari Kammel: A war zone, like an active war zone. I said I don't think that's for me. And he talked more about it with me, and so why don't you just go over visit our offices because we had a country office there up in the North in the Kurdistan area so obviously not in in like the major major war zones at least throughout the country. So just go for a week, see how it is. So me always wanted to try something. And say, okay, let me try it first and then I'll tell you if I really, really like it or not like it. I went over for a week

in springtime, and springtime in Kurdistan is beautiful, it's mountainous. There's lakes, there's all this beautiful springtime flowers coming up. And I met our staff there who I communicated with, this was 2010. We were doing all of our work off Skype, email, Google Docs you know, before pre-pandemic. So you know, I have been working in that environment for a long time with people, you know, across many time zones and and you know many electronic forms. So I got to meet a lot of them in person, and it was incredible. And I said, I think I really wanna choose this. So I came back home. I told my family I think I'm going to move to Iraq, and they, you know.

Leah Evert-Burks: I can imagine the response to that.

Kari Kammel: Yeah, my dad looked at me, and said yeah I'm not surprised. Others were, you know, a few family members crying and Oh, we're gonna miss you and I said, Oh, you know I get, I get R & R with this. I get to get out every few weeks. And I think this is a really great opportunity, so I can actually maybe do something with my skill set that really makes a difference. So I was sent over, I went over a couple of months later to start taking over the legal education project, which was one of my first projects. I was working with law professors, law deans, some lawyers and judges to really bolster experiential education. As well as some actual like, you know, facilitating of like the rebuilding law libraries and getting access to software. But the facilitation was an amazing experience and shocking. So I, I mean I'll be very, very blunt a couple of people told me you're gonna have a major problem. You're younger and you're a woman. You are, nobody's gonna respect you. Nobody's gonna listen to what you have to say, some of your staff is twenty years older than you, and here you are coming in as a foreign woman like you're going to have a really hard time, and I have to say that was never an issue for me. I would say in my career it's been a much bigger issue in the US than it ever was, working in either Egypt or Iraq, which is really disappointing to say, but reality. I found that, you know I had some really good pieces of advice from people which was one. You know you're American and a lot of Americans have come in and promised a lot of things, and then never followed through so they said, you're gonna have to build trust and one of the things you should do is under promise and over perform. So don't promise things that you are not 100% per sure. 100% sure that are gonna happen. You know you could say you're working on it. You can say this, but do not promise and walk away, because these people have been burned over and over and over again, and you'll probably have to carry some of that baggage, because, as we do in this country, they have a blanket view of a lot of Americans until you can prove otherwise. Which proved very true. And very good advice. And the other thing was to listen so open, open my ears. Don't come in with these preconceived notions of it should be done like this, and this and this and I watched that happen, you know, in a lot of meetings I was in with other American lawyers that were sent there you know from the government, from NGOs, from European lawyers. You know others that went in and said, Well, this is how we do it in our country this is how you're gonna do it here. We have a common law system in the

US. Other countries have civil law systems. Iraq had some hybrid version of civil and Sharia, or Islamic law system, and had done it in a different way. And for those of you who remember watching the Saddam Hussein trial happen it was very much, you know US trying to impose our legal system on what's a very, very different legal system, which caused a bit of a circus. But I learned just because we do it differently and our structure is different, doesn't mean ours is better you know these people have been trained in their legal system. They've gone through their legal education. They understand that. If we can help them strengthen their format that's more important than saying, Oh, you have to do it the common law way - you have to have this adversarial, you know, system between opposing opposing parties. Because that didn't work. I also learned too we had a couple of projects that were based on getting conflicting ethnic parties together and trying to come to some type of whatever you want to call it reconciliation, truth, and justice. There are a lot of terms that were were used for that, and I remember we did that with some law professors. It was one of my first meetings and we had a pretty tight budget, so we would bring people into our location because it was one of the safer places in the country. So we bring people in from all throughout the country and we didn't have a lot of money, so we would place like a lot of the, we would have people share a room like, you know, male professor share a room, female professor share a room. And we told people that in advance, and then, when they got the room assignments, I started to hear all these complaints. I will not stay in a room with a person from that ethnic group. I will not stay with this different religion than me. Really, you know really strong responses. Which partially was ignorance on my part. But we, I remember we had our first session. We fixed the room situation. Just give everybody their own room, and sort of bite it on the budget with that one. But went in, and people were very frustrated I don't want to be in a training with that person. I don't want to be at a training with someone there. So we went back to basics like, What do we have in common? What, what in this room do we all have in common? We're all lawyers number one, number two we're all lawyers in academia. That's another thing and then, when we started saying that I started hearing about everybody's complaints about their students, which you know now, having been in academia for a long time,

Leah Evert-Burks: There's a commonality!

Kari Kammel: There's a tension. This one is always making excuses and said, kid you not, the donkey ate their homework. and I was like we have our own version of that.

Leah Evert-Burks: Yes we do.

Kari Kammel: The dog ate my homework. And all of a sudden I you know we went totally off script and I said I'm gonna let this go like we, we need to focus on this like what do we have in common? And people started telling jokes, and I was I mean some of it I didn't understand, because I don't speak the Iraqi dialect but my translators telling me and we're laughing, and it just sort of broke down all that tension. And I know the American way is always to go straight to business. But important lesson learned

which I knew from Egypt that I knew from, you know the cultures I've been around growing up is you got to get people to be comfortable with each other, to see that commonality, whatever that may be. You know, these guys wanted to teach that was their passion. They're all frustrated by their students, which is also common but they all also had a lot of bureaucratic things that they had to deal with also sounds similar now, even even in academia and they they wanted to see their students to succeed, and they were short on resources. This is the same thing you hear from educators worldwide. But we got a chance to really do some cool stuff. And what came out of that was this amazing experience where we had decided to run the the Jessup International Moot Court Competition. So in legal education when we're talking about experiential education moot court is always one of those things. So for those of you who are not familiar with this it's where you basically do a fake court proceeding, and you pit two sides against each other, and they have to write written pleadings, and then they they do oral arguments and fight through that. So this was an international competition that's pretty well known. I had been a part of it when I was at the American University in Cairo for Egypt had been on the team for two years. Had been very involved with it as a student, and later, you know, a voluntary judge, and we had gotten money to do this with three universities in Iraq. And after doing some of these other trainings, I said, three universities? We gotta do this with everybody like I don't I don't care if It's not in our budget like we're gonna find it. We gotta find a way to do this like, we're not just gonna pick. It was like the three top universities in the country, so I rewrote part of that grant. I got permission from the Department of State to open it up to all twenty-two universities in the country. We did train the trainer training, so I brought in a lot of my old colleagues that I've done Jessup with, or I knew they were they were lawyers or judges in the area in in the Middle East, to come in and do the trainings. You know we we went through all of these fantastic like story lines of things we've heard, or you know, when someone really messes up, or what it looks like when someone's really nervous and then those coaches or they were law professors went back, and each trained a team. And we ran the first ever national version of this competition in Iraq. We had, I think, sixteen teams ended up being able to actually travel. And, as you can imagine, really high security, a lot of you know, a lot of factors. We had several languages, because not everybody in the country spoke Arabic, so we had some versions in Kurdish, some in Arabic, and I think there was even one in English. But we ran initial competition with our staff but with these faculty members from all over the country with these students who, I mean I was so blown away like I'd been doing this and preparing for this. They'd never done this before. They'd never seen this before. I mean I had always seen that you know others do it, or when I was in law school you see, everybody else do it. But these students were doing it. You know, while they're dealing with conflict, hearing stories where some of them can't even wear their suits in the street. They have to change in traditional garb to get to the school safely, and once they get there they can change. I mean all the barriers that they had to overcome to even just participate

in this competition was such an inspiration to me. And I it also helped me say like, okay, for the rest of my life I always have to put things into perspective. Am I mad that you know there's construction on the way to work this morning, and I might be 10 min late, yep, but it's not an IED and I don't have to change my clothes for my own safety to get to work. They inspired me. They really inspired me.

Leah Evert-Burks: I imagine so.

Kari Kammell: So it was incredible. It was incredible.

Leah Evert-Burks: Wow, wow. Well

Kari Kammell: Sorry!

Leah Evert-Burks: No, you know. Thank you for taking us through that. As I've mentioned to a number of people one of the reasons I wanted to do this episode was obviously to to introduce you to people that that may not be aware of your background. But to talk about your background. Because you have such extensive experience and some of those learnings that you were just talking about are things that translate over to what you do now, you know, figuring out the commonalities between people instead of focusing on the differences. Also the perspective of, yeah things could be worse. And we've got to kind of figure out how to put one foot forward and move forward. How to collaborate with diverse, you know, people and cultures, because obviously what we deal with at the Center is multicultural and worldwide. And you know, different risks and different industry groups and different mentalities. So, so thank you for for taking us through that. Again, it's just it's fascinating to hear about it. I do wanna to talk about how you came to MSU, and I know that you had at least one other position before you join the A-CAPP Center so can you tell us a little bit about that?

Kari Kammell: Sure. So that position was soon after I came back from Iraq and I was back in Chicago and I saw this opening at MSU, and I said, MSU, so you gotta be kidding me. That's like 20 miles from where I grew up. My mom's full family went to MSU. I had not. Thought, Oh I'll apply for this. It was that Middle Eastern Program Manager Position. It was a little bit more low-key than my prior position. I had left Iraq as Deputy Chief of Party for the Country Operation, and our offices have been shut down for security reasons, as one might imagine. So I said, let me let me go do this let's see how it is. So I went back. The job was a little different than I expected. It was much more low key than I'd been used to but I got a chance to still travel to the Middle East and and work in the region. I went to Libya a few weeks after I was hired, which I was not expecting and had still some friends in Libya that I met when I was in Egypt, as many people know their neighboring countries and had an interesting experience there. But then things got much more dangerous and we weren't able to go back. But I worked very closely with some Saudi Arabians, and some universities in Saudi Arabia. Had a chance to to do some more work, you know, with Egypt in some other places in Turkey. Which, as you may know, is partially between the Middle East and Europe. It fits sorta in both but neither of those locations, and that was really really great

for me. And I would say the biggest takeaway I had from that experience was learning about MSU because we would work with any unit on campus who would have a tie into what those program participants interest was. So if they were interested in engineering, I would work with Engineering Department. If they were interested in journalism I get to know the Journalism Department. Even in some cases there was a lot of interest in agriculture. Had I remembered I mean some of my mom's family had come to MSU way back many, many, many years ago, because they grew up on a farm, and that's how MSU started was the Michigan Agricultural College, and they were very interested, and I have never had the experience of being in a suit and going to the the cow pasture or the pig farm. But I had that experience in that job, and it was it was really interesting. And I remember we we took a Saudi Arabia group out there where everybody's in the suit. It's summer you know we're we're at the the cow farm and smell is overwhelming for me, because I'm not one who grew up on a farm and I must have made a face and one of the Saudis looked over me he's like, 'Oh, you don't like that smell?' I said it's not my favorite, it's like it's the smell of money, like you're actually right on that. But it was, that was an interesting like almost like clash of cultures experience, too. But how to moderate all of these visitors coming to campus and be an ambassador for MSU at the same time. So after a while there I said I haven't used my law degree in a while. I hadn't been doing any legal research which I had done a lot of before, and really is sort of reflecting on on anything. I mean, this was more pure training and education and professionals with a cultural component. And then I saw this job open up on campus on anti counterfeiting and product protection. What is that? Like, why, don't I know about this? So I like like I usually do with something interests me. I jump into the deep end. Research everything I can and read and read and read all night long to get as much information as I can, and I was like I didn't learn about this in law school. Like, how can this not be the case? I took IP law. I took criminal law. I took contracts. This is so interesting. So I read everything I could on the website. And the position wasn't a legal position but I was like there's legal stuff here. It was for an education and outreach position and I said Okay, I've been doing professional education now for quite some time. And I've also been doing outreach in many ways. Everything from early on after law school working with Heads of State to the NGO work I'd done in Egypt, to working with corporations and other things like that. So I said okay I'm gonna give it, I'm gonna give it a whirl and we'll see. So I interviewed. I don't know if you remember that it's been a while.

Leah Evert-Burks: I do. I do.

Kari Kammel: Seven and a half years ago. And somehow I got the position and I fell in love with it. I fell in love with this really fascinating, weird, bizarre area of law and criminality and business, but also culture, international issues. And I would even contend human rights issues built into some of this.

Leah Evert-Burks: Oh yes.

Kari Kammel: How we talk about some of the labor practices, or what we know, which is still very difficult to prove, but we know that this has a very disparate impact on poor or marginalized communities that maybe don't have the purchasing savvy or power to be able to distinguish what they're buying. So it's been an area that is very intellectually interesting to me still is, becomes more so almost every day. As you may know, whenever we think we figured the problem out, you know ten more problems pop up.

Leah Evert-Burks: It morphs. It keeps it interesting.

Kari Kammel: It does which I like. I'm not the personality type to do the same things every day. I want to, I want to be pushed to be able to really think outside the box. Come up with these solutions, and also, you know, really deal with people globally on this issue. I know the Center historically started in the US which makes sense, we're based in the US. You know our home is in Michigan, but we know that this issue knows no boundaries. And in very I would say few circumstances does it involve something within a contained jurisdiction. So that international part of it, and to even hear people globally all struggle with the same issue, all struggle with the same behavior from consumers. I'll be it slightly different in different locations, the same issues, you know, with not enough funding to prosecute this or political will, or what that what that may be that brings me back to that training in Iraq with trying to find the commonalities. What are the commonalities we have? How can we capitalize on them and move forward?

Leah Evert-Burks: Yeah, I think I think you've articulated well, some of the things that are intriguing about brand protection, and also frustrating. What, what do you find inspiring about brand protection?

Kari Kammel: So for me one of the most inspiring things is that nobody comes to this field from the same exact background. Part of that is because I don't have a very traditional background. So I feel it. I fit it a little bit better than I might have in another career, maybe working for a law firm or something. You know something that's more traditional that a lot of my colleagues did. But I I really enjoy working with people that are coming from totally different mindsets of meet, than I am. But we all have the same goals in mind, albeit getting there in a different way. I think that brings a lot of power to it, but it also makes it really interesting, and it makes it actually empowering. You know that we can all come in a certain way and this isn't, this isn't something that's only limited to you know, multinational corporations, you know small businesses can go after this, too, or it's not just limited to the US because of the Lanham Act and the Trademark Counterfeiting Act but other countries are actually doing things as well in their own way. They're not all the same, they're, none of them are perfect. They're all far from perfect. But everyone can go about it in their own way and I hear I mean as you have articulated throughout all of your *Brand Protection Stories Podcasts*, these different people who have gone through these experiences to me that's very inspirational to hear about them and hear that they're never

straightforward. They're never a traditional investigation. It's never A to Z. It comes all over the place involves all these things that we would never imagine. That's interesting to me and I think that's inspirational, too. That people have stuck with it, and I find that very few people get in it and say, Oh, yeah, this isn't for me - people get in it and they're like wait what's going on here? Oh, this is interesting! Whoa! How can I help out with this like? What can we do to you know, to work together to to really go after this problem. I think every now and then I mean, we lose sight of that end goal. But you know, and I say we is maybe a community. We get involved in the weeds a bit and forget. You know we want consumers to be safe we don't want brands' IP to be compromised. You know we want to have as much, you know much of that truth, and in the point of origin as possible. But besides that, I mean I think we're all fighting for a similar goal, which is which is inspirational to me.

Leah Evert-Burks: And thinking about that you have actually testified twice in front of Congress regarding the the Shop Safe Act of 2021. Why is legislation so important, and why is it important for a Center like the A-CAPP Center to appear in these forums?

Kari Kammel: Great question. So that goes back to my rule of law work. Legislation is a form of rule of law. It creates an environment and a standard that should be adhered to. Of course there's procedural and substantive rule of law issues meaning you can have a piece of legislation, but if you don't ever use it it's totally ineffective, so procedurally, it may be there. But if you're not using it it doesn't work and you know I'm not someone who believes legislation solves everything, by any means. But when we see a problem that is continuing and it's growing, and it's becoming exacerbated, and there's no solution in sight that's naturally coming out of the marketplace, then sometimes it's time for for legislation, and I think this is the case that we're seeing in ecommerce. And I know I see this in my job every day but I can't help but pull in my personal life of me and my loved ones around me that I know buy counterfeit are deceived by ads that they see on social media and online. I mean, I bought counterfeit probably eight times last year. And here, I think. Oh, I work at the A-CAPP Center I'm really savvy, I tell people what to do to avoid, you know, buying counterfeit online. And yet I am still deceived by what I see, and I buy it. I mean for me that means something really needs to change. There needs to be a massive change, and as a fan of history, you know, we look back at least in the US at times when it became necessary to legislate against corporations or other things. And I think of you know, when we think of labor laws from back, you know, back a 100 some years ago, when there was serious abuse of employees in the workforce. So you know a lot of labor unions came out of that, I mean, obviously it's shifted today. It's very different you know people can afford a lawyer for example. So it's not quite the same but there was the situation that wasn't getting worked out, or we see you know, even something like the car industry where you know there were no safety requirements. They were, it was up to them to do it, and they they may be balanced like profits versus, you know, safety of employees like we, we get to determine that. And that

ended up with a lot of people, you know, getting hurt. And so, you know, a law was passed, liability laws have been, in effect, you know, to deal with those issues. So I think we're at that point and we see that, too, with technological changes. When we talk about those labor laws, you know, factories, we're getting new types of technology, and that were dangerous. We talk about new technologies with cars and the you know the ability to to make cars better than they had been 50, 60 years ago, 30 years ago. Now we're seeing that I think in the online space. We have this amazing technology that, you know, makes my life a little bit easier. But I also want to be safe and there's no there's no law that requires that and has been able to deal with the shift to the online space. You know when I hear that some of the elderly members of my family are wanting to buy their vitamins you know off of social media ads because they said, Oh, there's this vitamin that my doctor's office doesn't offer, but says it can do this, that gets a little scary for me that means it's time it's time to do something. So in my testimony one I think it's important that you know I could speak as an academic and someone who's worked at the Center to say, you know I don't work for a company, I don't work for the Government. You know I work in this place where we've seen all of these things across the board. We've seen all these different segments of of brand protection and anti-counterfeiting and players in this field, and if we can step back a moment and look at this, the shift is happening right now, in our society and in the way we shop. How can we make sure everybody's safe and how can we protect people without, of course, you know paralyzing trade, which I don't think any of these pieces of legislation would do, may slow it down a little bit. Do consumers want it faster, of course you know but faster is not always better. More isn't always better as as we know. But but to make sure that people are safe, and that and what they see is real, as as real and truthful as it can be. And I know that ties into a lot of the deception that's been happening online on many many many levels in the last couple of years. I think of this like fake movement, where you see everything from you know, influencers, you know, showing fake experiences to fake news to fake products. And the that that whole you know, they're all connected in one way or another. I know we don't really deal with that at the Center, but it's part of this larger larger thing that we're seeing that that yes, I think really needs to be sort of reined in and have some penalties for it because it is dangerous and it does affect brands very negatively. And therefore it affects our economy, too.

Leah Evert-Burks: So what they shifts in these changes that we see happening? Do you see an evolution of the role of the A-CAPP Center? And along those lines, now that you're taking over the helm is the director. What opportunities do you see in directing, the a, in guiding the Center?

Kari Kammel: So great questions. So the first part of course of course, they're there has to be an evolution, right? and I think that's the case for any any unit, any center, any institute, any university, but also any company, right? We can never, if we're stagnant, and the world is moving around us. It, it becomes really problematic. And as we have seen, some of the strategies that were formulated early on

the A-CAPP Center are still very valid. Some of the we talk about like the risk assessments and the holistic strategies. You know, those should be applicable regardless of what technology looks like. But I think we need to continue to grow along with this technological movement. And whether that means we now do academic analyses of the existing technology, or how it's used or even the environment in which it's set in, I think it's very important for us to do that I think we need to continue to be a neutral, academic voice that can talk about these issues. But I think we're going to hear less about individual criminal investigations which we might have heard a lot about, you know, when I first started at the A-CAPP Center and more about you know what I've written about like law disruptive technology like, can we just legislative but new technological requirements on, is that going to help us five years from now, or can we just slap a new technology on, or can we hope AI will save us? I don't think so, but we need to be able to critically think about that, research about that. But then also talk about it and make sure that we are still communicating with with the whole brand protection field. And that's the other thing I mean I know at our core we've always been working with brand owners or IP rights owners, law enforcement and government and I think that's still our core. But I think we need to have you know more in-depth conversations with everybody in the field. Whether that means lawmakers, whether that means, you know, e-commerce and social media platforms, whether that means online, you know web scrapers, whoever that may be to really have you know some of these conversations about what does this look like? How can, how can we, you know, inform the community? I think, continue to inform the community. How, how can we continue to take a neutral perspective? I think that that remains really important for our growth.

Leah Evert-Burks: Great. Well, before we wind down here I do want to touch on a few things that you have been responsible for some successes you've been responsible for at the A-CAPP Center, one being the the certificate program, the brand protection certificate program. Our student Interns which have become really career incubators for the brand protection community, and also establishing internal on MSU campus partners, and also external partners. So I wanted to give you just a chance to talk about those few things, and add in a you know, a few other successes that our listeners may not be aware of.

Kari Kammel: Sure so with all the ones you just mentioned, they all involve people. And I I mean, as you can probably tell, I love working with people. You know I love connecting people. I love you know talking about this area, especially the students who've never heard about it before, and sort of watch them go, whoa, what is this? I did the student presentation earlier this week, and I could just see like eyes getting bigger and like, what, I've never heard of this, which I imagine was my reaction to when I first started this. I mean since since a long time ago probably during my master's program and even prior to that, I've always worked around student programs. I was involved in them as a college student, and a master's student, and even as a JD student. I think they're really important and I for for what I can do I

enjoy creating a diverse student group and that means diversity on so many levels - background experience, identity, but also even major and to have these students learn how to work with each other in these environments. And then get this passion for brand protection, and anti-counterfeiting in their own way. And then see them go out and get these different positions within the field. Within all types of different companies and organizations has always been really exciting for me. I'm continuing, to teach both of the law school and then I'll be teaching a few courses in the criminal justice program as well, which I you know, always keeps me on my toes, and I like it because sometimes students come out of like left field with some question that I'm like, Oh, my God, how come none of us have ever thought this before! And it keeps me on my toes so it's not just those of us in the office, and our partners talking about a lot of the things that we're all aware about and we're all reading articles about. I like that. I like being being pushed by by students, and sometimes they come up with these fantastic ideas or observations that we can say, you know, let's enable you and empower you why don't you write an article about this and that may start off their career with that opportunity. And then sorry you mentioned across campus to other outreach. Again I like connecting people. Part of it is the way I think and it goes all the way back to the way I grew up. Where it's like you have a whole bunch of people here. How can you connect them? What are the commonalities? And that may be for a project? Maybe it's for a panel, maybe it's just for a conversation. But if you have these three or four people, like oh, it's like a puzzle in my mind, how can we connect them? How can we take the strength and the strength, and build something out of it? And I'm really passionate about that and I really enjoy doing it. So it's something that I'm excited to continue to do on campus with a lot of our partners that have been, some of them have been with us since the inception of A-CAPP even before me. Some are more recent and are curious about this idea, as well as some of our academic partners off campus. You know we have, we have some internationally, and some throughout the country that have, you know, really are also very intellectually curious about this. And then we have, you know, our our Advisory Board, who have been, you know, huge, you know supporters and rocks of the Center and then a lot of other companies that we've been working with over the years are organizations or even governmental agencies that have been great partners that you know I hope to not only continue, but build on and see how we can sort of, we can push the limit. How we can ask the question, say can we do this? Answer maybe no. But it's worth asking. We might get a yes, and we might be able to do something really fantastic.

Leah Evert-Burks: Great. Well, I'm gonna kind of spring this on you Kari but in *Brand Protection Stories* I always asks the guest to pick one word that describes their story, their experience. What word would you select to describe either your your time at A-CAPP, or where you see A-CAPP going in the future? You can, you can select two words if you'd like.

Kari Kammel: That's a good one, and I should have been prepared for that, right? So I would say, and I don't know if everyone will enjoy this response, but boundary pushing and creative so I would say those two. I'm not one to want to stick with the status quo and do something just because it's always been done that way, or because it's the path of least resistance.

Leah Evert-Burks: I think we can't do that in brand protection, because as we as we discussed it's forever morphing, so you have to be willing to be, creative and push boundaries. So, Kari, thank you so much for joining us for this special episode of *Brand Protection Stories Podcast* and you know you and I have worked together for over 7 years - I'm excited for your leadership and taking the Center in new directions and continuing to grow to service the brand protection. community. So thank you for spending time with us today.

Kari Kammel: Thank you Leah it's a pleasure and I'm excited to continue working with you as well.

Leah Evert-Burks: In the next episode of Brand Protection Stories, we talk with Joshua Hopping, seasoned online investigator on Open-Source Investigations in brand protection. You may be surprised what can be gathered online to pull together the various seemingly divergent trails to get to the counterfeiters.

Brandon Drain: Thanks for joining us today for this edition of *Brand Protection Stories*, produced by the Center for Anti-Counterfeiting and Product Protection (or A-CAPP) @ Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI. Please visit us @ a-capp.msu.edu. A-CAPP is a non-profit organization founded in 2009. It is the premier academic body focusing upon the complex global issues of anti-counterfeiting and product protection of all products, across all industries, in all markets responsible for training the next generation of brand protection professionals. In addition to this series, we offer self-paced online certificate courses in brand protection, applied education and academic courses, executive education, student internships, live summits and virtual events, and publish the quarterly digital industry journal, *The Brand Protection Professional* - now in its 6th year of publication.

Leah Evert-Burks: This is Leah Evert-Burks with A-CAPP. Until our next session, keep protecting your brands, and the world's consumers. Keep it real.