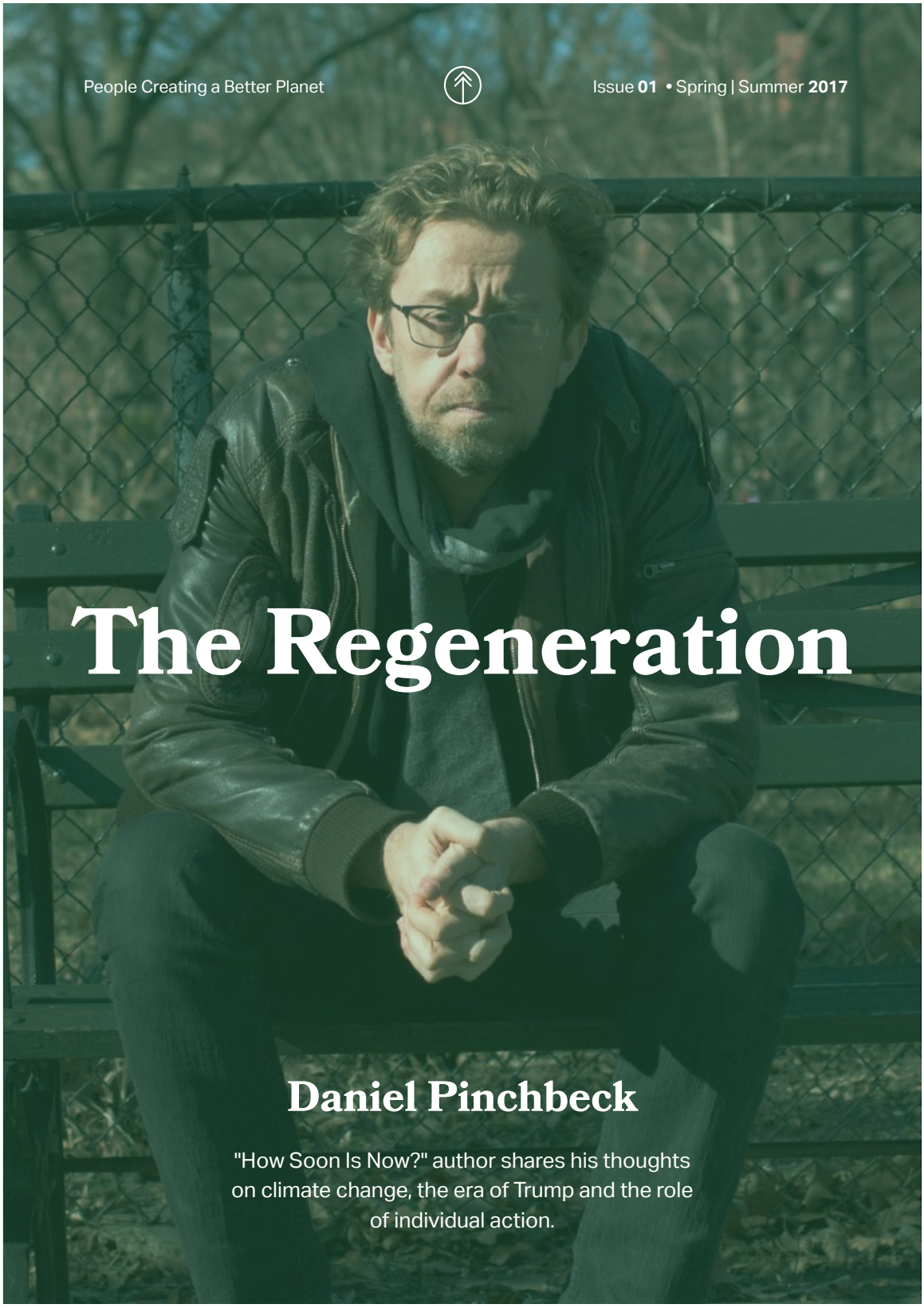
People Creating a Better Planet

Issue **01** • Spring | Summer **2017**



The Regeneration

Daniel Pinchbeck

"How Soon Is Now?" author shares his thoughts on climate change, the era of Trump and the role of individual action.

What's inside?

Interviews, articles, art, products and photography from ecologically conscious creatives around the world.

Issue 01

"Why are trees such social beings? Why do they share food with their own species and sometimes even go so far as to nourish their competitors? The reasons are the same as for human communities: there are advantages to working together. A tree is not a forest. On its own, a tree cannot establish a consistent local climate. It is at the mercy of wind and weather. But together, many trees create an ecosystem that moderates extremes of heat and cold, stores a great deal of water and generates a great deal of humidity. And in this protected environment, trees can live to be very old. To get to this point, the community must remain intact no matter what. If every tree were looking out only for itself, then quite a few of them would never reach old age. Regular fatalities would result in many large gaps in the tree canopy, which would make it easier for storms to get inside the forest and uproot more trees. The heat of summer would reach the forest floor and dry it out. Every tree would suffer.

Every tree, therefore, is valuable to the community and worth keeping around for as long as possible. And that is why even sick individuals are supported and nourished until they recover. Next time, perhaps it will be the other way round, and the supporting tree might be the one in need of assistance.

A tree can be only as strong as the forest that surrounds it."

– Peter Wohlleben
from "The Secret Life of Trees"

The Regeneration

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Issue 1 • Spring | Summer 2017
ISBN: 978-1545389324

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Our Values

1

Drawing the connections between the largest movement on Earth.

From businesses to nonprofits and small personal passion projects, we're here because we share a mutual love for planet Earth.

2

Showcasing contributions that drive meaningful conversation.

These are inspired by positive change, resiliency and innovation, not fear mongering.

3

Promoting the commonly forgotten connection between social justice and environmental sustainability.

This movement is not for the rich or poor. Its goal is to improve the quality of life for all living things.

4

Believing that sales figures are not the only measurement of success.

Therefore, we don't pursue growth for growth's sake, but only if all of these values can be upheld.

5

Acknowledging the evolution of the economy away from free market capitalism.

We need to showcase the businesses and non profits that are trying to achieve a true triple bottom line. These organizations are at the forefront of the next wave of our economy, and the more we can learn from them, the better we can adapt their models at economies of scale.

6

Practicing what we preach and taking great efforts to minimize our environmental footprint.

We use recycled materials, optimize our supply chain and (when possible) do not pulp unsold copies. We will also only accept support from companies that align with The Regeneration's values.

What you'll find inside ...

Letter from the Director

I think it's pertinent to start this first issue with something that David Frum, speechwriter for George W. Bush, said in a recent article, published by The Atlantic.

In the piece he said, "Successful movements are built upon concrete single demands that can readily be translated into practical action: 'Votes for women.' 'End the draft.' 'Overturn Roe v. Wade.' 'Tougher punishments for drunk driving.'"

I couldn't agree more. But what is the singular demand of the climate change movement? We need a rallying cry, and I believe it's to "Create a more equitable world for all living things."

Paul Hawken puts it more elequently:

"What I see are ordinary and some not-so-ordinary individuals willing to confront despair, power and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice and beauty to this world."

These passionate individuals should be recognized. The more we share their stories, the easier it will be to learn from their work.

I've always believed that individual actions can create rippling changes. The scale has never mattered, because so many of the things we do have both visible and invisible reactions. We live in a beautiful, deeply interconnected world full of opportunities to make positive change — the effects of which you may never feel. But it's this mystery, the possibility of doing good, that has continued to drive me forward. I'm constantly inspired by the magic of nature and the people who do amazing things to change the way humanity perceives their relationship with the natural world.

Over the years, I've had the pleasure of reading and studying work from designers like Wendell Berry, Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright. These people monumentally changed our perspective and approach to building community, our relationship with agriculture, the disconnect between modern economics on a finite planet and more. But who are their modern counterparts?

There is a new generation of creatives, thinkers and writers who are beginning to leave their mark and to change the course of modern civilization as we know it.

The goal of this magazine is to talk to them, to learn what are they doing and to share it with you. I truly believe climate change will be the single most important issue of the 21st century. It is already causing conflicts and will continue to do so if we don't begin to create resilient systems. What's worse is that our media isn't inspiring us to take action or providing us with the stories and information we need.

That is why I want to highlight the individuals who are working to bring positive environmental and social change to the world — big and small.

You might be thinking, why a print magazine if we're talking about the environment? The short of the long is that phones, computers and tablets still use a ton of energy. And we tend to consume digital media in a mad rush. Print encourages us to take time to digest what we're reading. And I believe the ideas and people within these pages are worth slowing down for.

I hope this print magazine is not one you'll discard. I hope it's one you'll keep on your shelf, share with friends, dig into and revisit.

- Kyle Calian, Director

"When I look around this troubled world, it's increasingly clear that one of the human qualities in deepest decline – and most desperate need – is creativity.

Powerful, transformative and profound creativity."

– Umair Haque

An excerpt from the introduction of "Blessed Unrest," by Paul Hawken. The passage sets the stage for this magazine and for this movement.

Paul Hawken

Author of
Blessed Unrest

Illustration
Hannah Salyer

By any conventional definition, this vast collection of committed individuals does not constitute a movement. Movements have leaders and ideologies. People join movements, study their tracts, and identify themselves with a group. They read the biography of the founder(s) or listen to them perorate on tape or in person. Movements, in short, have followers. This movement, however, doesn't fit the standard model. It is dispersed, inchoate, and fiercely independent. It has no manifesto or doctrine, no overriding authority to check with. It is taking shape in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, companies, deserts, fisheries, slums — and yes, even fancy New York hotels. One of its distinctive features is that it is tentatively emerging as a global humanitarian movement arising from the bottom up. Historically social movements have arisen primarily in response to injustice, inequities, and corruption. Those woes still remain legion, joined by a new condition that has no precedent: the planet has a life-threatening disease, marked by massive ecological degradation and rapid climate change. As I counted the vast number of organizations it crossed my mind that perhaps I was witnessing the growth of something organic, if not biologic. Rather than a movement in the conventional sense, could it be an instinctive, collective response to threat? Is it atomized for reasons that are innate to its purpose? How does it function? How fast is it growing? How is it connected? Why is it largely ignored? Does it have a history? Can it successfully address the issues that governments are failing to: energy, jobs, conservation, poverty, and global warming? Will it become centralized, or will it continue to be dispersed and cede its power to ideologies and fundamentalism?

I sought a name for the movement, but none exists. I met people who wanted to structure or organize it — a difficult task, since it would easily be the most complex association of human beings ever assembled. Many outside the movement critique it as powerless, but that assessment does not stop its growth. When describing it to politicians, academics, and businesspeople, I found that many believe they are already familiar with this movement, how it works, what it consists of, and its approximate size. They base their conclusion on media reports about Amnesty International, the Sierra Club, Oxfam, or other venerable institutions. They may be directly acquainted with a few smaller organizations and may even sit on the board of a local group. For them and others the movement is small, known, and circumscribed, a new

type of charity, with a sprinkling of ragtag activists who occasionally give it a bad name. People inside the movement can also underestimate it, basing their judgment on only the organizations they are linked to, even though their networks can only encompass a fraction of the whole. But after spending years researching this phenomenon, including creating with my colleagues a global database of its constituent organizations, I have come to these conclusions: this is the largest social movement in all of human history. No one knows its scope, and how it functions is more mysterious than what meets the eye.

What does meet the eye is compelling: coherent, organic, self-organized congregations involving tens of millions of people dedicated to change. When asked at colleges if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science that describes what is happening on earth today and aren't pessimistic, you don't have the correct data. If you meet the people in this unnamed movement and aren't optimistic, you haven't got a heart. What I see are ordinary and some not-so-ordinary individuals willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. In the not-so-ordinary category, contrast ex-president Bill Clinton and sitting president George W. Bush. As I write this, Bush is on TV snarled in a skein of untruths as he tries to keep the lid on a nightmarish war fed by inept and misguided ambition; simultaneously the Clinton Global Initiative (which is a nongovernmental organization) met in New York and raised $7.3 billion in three days to combat global warming, injustice, intolerance, and poverty. Of the two initiatives, war and peace, which addresses root causes? Which has momentum? Which does not offend the world? Which is open to new ideas? The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "My heart is moved by all I cannot save: / So much has been destroyed / I have cast my lot with those / who, age after age, perversely, /with no extraordinary power, / reconstitute the world." There could be no better description of the audiences I met in my lectures.

"This is the story without apologies of what is going right on this planet, narratives of imagination and conviction, not defeatist accounts about the limits."

This is the story without apologies of what is going right on this planet, narratives of imagination and conviction, not defeatist accounts about the limits. Wrong is an addictive, repetitive story; Right is where the movement is. There is a rabbinical teaching that holds that if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, you first plant a tree and then see if the story is true. Islam has a similar teaching that tells adherents that if they have a palm cutting in their hand on Judgment Day, plant the cutting. Inspiration is not garnered from the recitation of what is flawed; it resides, rather, in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. "Consider" (con sidere) means "with the stars;" reconsider means to rejoin the movement of heaven and life. The emphasis here is on humanity's intention, because humans are frail and imperfect. People are not always literate or educated. Most families in the world are impoverished and may suffer from chronic illnesses. The poor cannot always get the right foods for proper nutrition, and must struggle to feed and educate their young. If citizens with such burdens can rise above their quotidian difficulties and act with the clear intent to confront exploitation and bring about restoration, then something powerful is afoot. And it is not just the poor, but people of all races and classes everywhere in the world. "One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Although the six o'clock news is usually concerned with the death of strangers, millions of people work on behalf of strangers. This altruism has religious, even mythic origins and very practical eighteenth-century roots.

Abolitionists were the first group to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no citizen group had ever filed a grievance except as it related to itself. Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists then, just as conservatives taunt liberals, progressives, do-gooders, and activists today by making those four terms pejoratives. Healing the wounds of the earth and its people does not require saintliness or a political party, only gumption and persistence. It is not a liberal or conservative activity; it is a sacred act. It is a massive enterprise undertaken by ordinary citizens everywhere, not by self-appointed governments or oligarchies.

From "BLESSED UNREST: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World" by Paul Hawken, published by Viking, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Daniel Pinchbeck

Author of
"How Soon is Now?"

"How Soon Is Now?" author shares his thoughts on climate change, the era of Trump and the role of individual action.

Interview and Photos
Kyle Calian

Q: When did you realize you wanted to speak and write about sustainability?

A: Actually, I prefer the idea of resilient or regenerative systems to sustainability. Nature does more than sustain herself; she flourishes and thrives. I first started thinking about ecological subjects when I was a journalist in my mid-twenties. I wrote a story for Esquire on the decline of the sperm count by 50 percent in the last half-century. They thought it was funny. I discovered it was quite a significant subject. Pesticides and plastics concentrating were impacting our endocrine system. I realized people couldn't focus on the ecological threats we were facing as a species. They were too distracted and also cynical.

I began to realize there was a huge hole culturally. We are facing an extinction-level event, potentially, yet we can't face it. Our relationship to the Earth's ecology should be the most important and the first thing we care about, as indigenous cultures tell us. Newspapers like The New York Times should have a daily ecology section instead of a sports section, reporting on the quality of the water, the local species, the health of the soil and so on. The whole prioritization of our culture is very wrong.

What was your path from journalism to writing about psychedelics and shamanism to your new book, "How Soon is Now," which is about climate change and human ecology.

I consider my work to be a very coherent and rational undertaking, which may sound funny to some people who might say, "He's writing about psychedelic drugs. He's so fringe." But as I said, I had this experience with ecology and why people couldn't focus on it, so I began to poll myself and my friends. I realized we were functioning under a nihilistic worldview, where we believed in scientific materialism and no possibility of any form of consciousness outside of this body and this experience.

That led us to not really care about the future. Because if you think that this is it, then why would you care about seven generations from now, as indigenous people do? I began to ask the question, "How do I know that scientific materialism is correct?" which led me to write a book about Shamanism and to visit tribal people. I had so many experiences that confirmed their spiritual understanding, like Carl Jung's understanding that there is a collective psyche and that there are other dimensions of consciousness and space-time. So, when I wrote the first book, I was answering, "What is really going on?" and I learned that our modern society had missed the big picture.

My second book, "2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl," was a logical follow-up. If our worldview and value system is deeply mistaken, and these other cultures know a lot that we don't know, then we have to take their way of understanding the world a lot more seriously. Indigenous people view this era as very prophetic, as a time of transformation or change. I was really trying to grasp their knowledge systems

and how they relate to our understanding of reality. I tried to find the junctures between our beliefs and their knowledge, by studying philosophers like Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, as well as visionaries like Rudolf Steiner and Carl Jung.

The media kind of glommed onto that title and framed it as a doomsday book. I saw how distorted the media can be when they receive new kinds of information and go on the attack instead of trying to receive. It's almost like an immune system response. So, after all of this, I stopped to ask myself, "If I agree with these indigenous peoples that this is a time of transformation, then what is on the other side of this?"

All of these books have been journalism in a sense, or scholarly, but in my own way. The new book tries to answer the questions: What's the situation we're in, what's the crisis we're facing and what's the solution set?

What does the subtitle of the book, "From Personal Initiation to Global Transformation," mean?

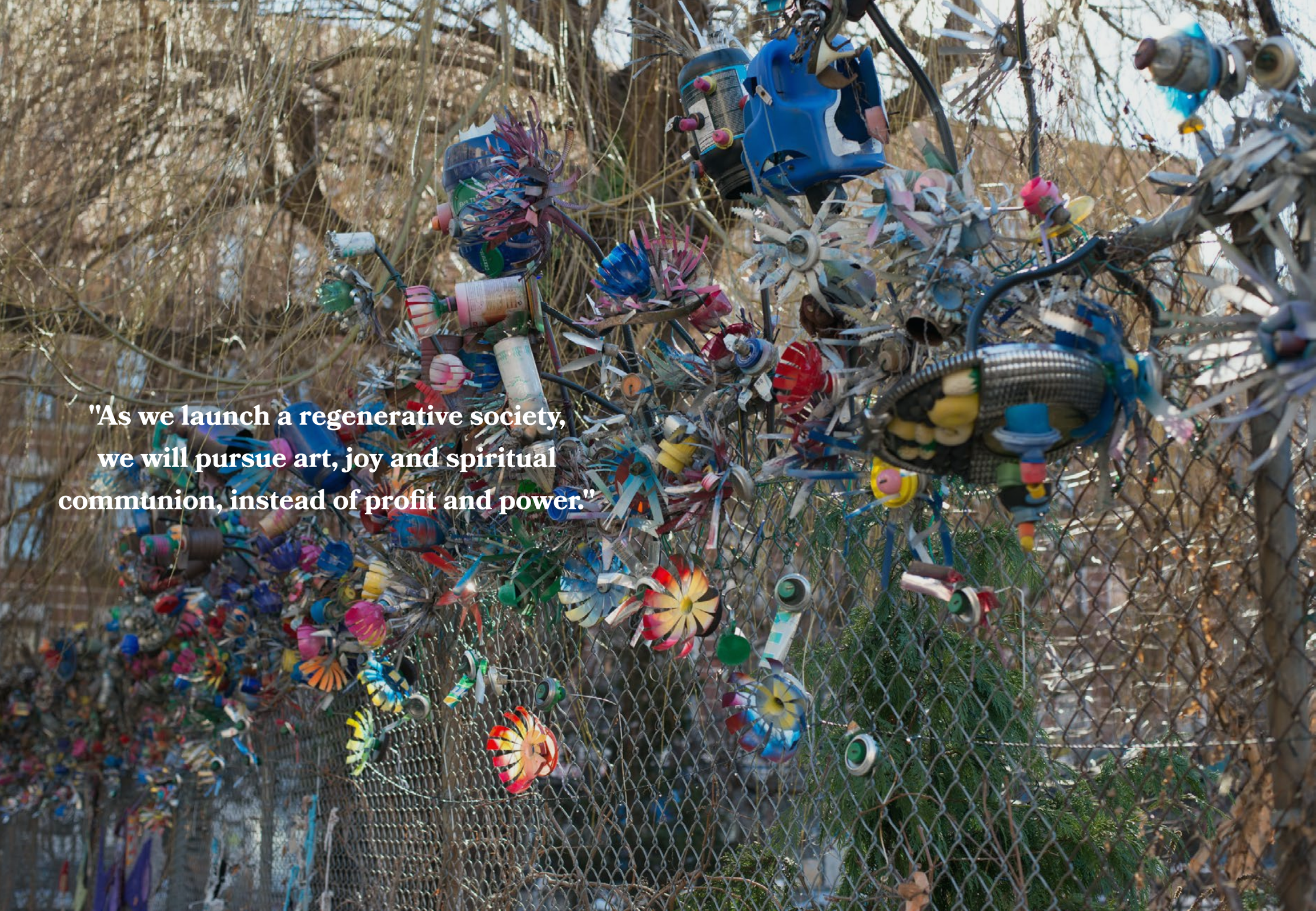
I feel like over the last 40 years, many people have gone through a spiritual journey through yoga or meditation or a shamanic experience. But because these things are still on the margins, they can still become just another self-serving thing. This guy Chögyam Trungpa, the Tibetan lama, refers to this as "spiritual materialism." People create a great yoga practice, they've gotten themselves in shape and they've found this great calm and inner peace. Meanwhile, as we can now see, the whole world is going to hell in a handbasket, and we have the worst possible people owning and running everything. Those people who have gone through that voyage of self discovery and healing initiation now need to figure out how to engage with the planetary crisis.

Does the book's title have any connection to the Smiths album of the same name?

No, it has no connection at all. I wrote a lot of the book here in the East Village. In front of the cafe I worked at, there was a white van that had "How Soon is Now" spray-painted on it. I never even knew about the Smiths album — just some van wisdom.

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something bigger? You mentioned you've gone through phases of nihilism and scientific materialism.

What I wanted to be as a younger person was a novelist or a poet — some sort of creative artist. Both of my parents were artists. My father was a painter. My mother was a writer. I felt that creative self-expression was at the core of what I wanted to do and be. Over time, going through the process of writing these books, it became more about recognizing that I was able to undergo certain intellectual explorations. For whatever reason, other people weren't able to go as deep on their own, so that was my way of serving society creatively.


"As we launch a regenerative society,
we will pursue art, joy and spiritual
communion, instead of profit and power."

How are you feeling about the era of politics we're stepping into and the role of individual action?

This guy Jonathan Zapper argued that Trump's victory is so absurd that we might actually be living in a videogame or a simulation — a lot of people have approached this idea from different angles. I do like his way of thinking about it. If it is a simulation, or some sort of spectacle that other dimensional beings are enjoying, then the way to succeed is to be a story-intensifying character. So, Trump has intensified all the plot lines to a tremendous degree.

Obviously, there are things that individuals can and should do, but ultimately these actions need to be organized and orchestrated into a collective movement. My hope is that social technologies or social networks can somehow facilitate that.

As someone who has been described as a futurist, what are some global trends you're seeing?

I'm definitely seeing a trend to create alternative communities and networks — in some cases physical communities in urban areas or in countries like Costa Rica — and try to model a post-capitalist utopia.

I also feel like Trump's victory created an electric shock in a lot of people, and I see a lot of people creating activism groups being far more proactive. People who weren't even thinking about social issues now seem to be deeply engaged. I think there's a greater awareness that the system is broken, really really broken.

On the negative side, however, I don't think anyone was aware of the rise of this extreme white, right-wing ideology, which bears a lot of resemblance to neo-nazism. Through Facebook, I've been communicating with young men who believe there is a Jewish conspiracy and that we should have concentration camps again. These ideas, which were so incredibly marginal you couldn't even speak about them, are now finding currency. In a way, America has entered into a collective psychosis, which we've done before (think back to the Salem Witch Trials or McCarthyism).

Or Japanese concentration camps.

Exactly. We don't know how deep it's going to go. Trump is probably not going to create progressive social policies that are going to tangibly benefit his followers. So, then it's going to be bread and circuses — how do we divert the public with war or by demonizing groups within this country. It's a very predictable playbook.

The alternative on the left-wing side doesn't feel cohesive right now either. Everyone just feels broken and confused.

Can you speak about what you believe needs to happen to foster a more symbiotic relationship with the planet?

In the new book I try to look at how we could move back into balance. We can see how fast things are changing now, and some of them won't be reversible unless there's some sort of miraculous technology. For instance, we're probably going to see significant sea-level rise within a century, which could wipe out coastal cities. In order to survive, people are going to have to create new urban environments that are hopefully more like eco-cities.

The three main buckets that I talk about are technology (the technical infrastructure), economics and social structures, and consciousness, which is determined by culture and media, beliefs and ideologies. Those three areas can all evolve to deal with this menace we've created.

We need to shift to a renewable energy system. We could do that through global mobilization in a decade or two. We could shift from monoculture farming to regenerative agriculture, which would replenish topsoil. We could also have a global reduction or moratorium on meat eating, so we can return 30 percent of the earth's surface to forest and reduce the CO2 and methane emissions caused by factory farming.

In terms of industry, there's this idea that William McDonough put forward that all our industries could positively feed back into one another, like Earth's ecosystems. Biodegradable and compostable plastics could, for example, have seeds in them. So, instead of them causing environmental damage, a fruit tree blossoms. We should be focusing on shifting our systems to be reusing, recycling and getting companies to build products that way.

Our cellphones, for example, are massive contributors to ecological harm. Some 3 million people have died in West Africa mining virgin conflict minerals. We should be treating these devices as precious.

We're running low on a lot of precious minerals and metals. Instead of planned obsolescence built into our consumer model, where we're just junking stuff, we should be building products and systems where all the components can be reused or replaced. That really requires a different economic and political-economic model — ways of exchanging value that support sharing behavior, ecologically responsible behavior. Unfortunately, the money system we have now is based off debt, which basically forces unsustainable growth, because everyone's trying to make back that debt or that interest on the debt.

Hypothetically, we could have a currency with negative interest, so there's no value in holding it and people want to share with their community when they have an excess of something. There are a lot of redesign possibilities in the political-economic system that we could implement.

Who have been your biggest influences?

One is José Argüelles, who I wrote about in the 2012 book. He died in 2011, and I actually published his last book, "Manifesto for the Noosphere." He was a big thinker on the Mayan Calendar, and he created this thing called "The Dreamspell," which was a postmodern version of the Mayan Calendar


"Just as a caterpillar in the chrysalis
can't imagine flight, we can't envision
our own future unfolding."

"Look at yourself with almost a permaculture like approach. Who are you, what skills have you got and what can you offer? And have a lot of forgiveness for yourself and others, because nobody is perfect."

where everyone has a galactic signature. He was a very big thinker and a lot of his early work is just brilliant. I love the idea of making an art piece out of time.

Another big influence is Buckminster Fuller. He was a design scientist who foresaw the '60s, and that humanity had a choice between utopia or oblivion. He knew we either had to come together as the human community as a whole, or we wouldn't survive as a species. A lot of his ideas are part of my new book and thinking.

Do you ever feel like you're not doing enough, and when that happens what do you do?

Sometimes you have to just not do anything. You have to allow yourself to know that those times are also necessary. My biggest regret, well not really regret, but it does bring me sadness ... I started this company Evolver with an old friend. I found that we were bumping heads a lot, so I left and he found another partner.

It's still going, and the for-profit side has an event space here on 1st Street. They're still publishing the blog, Reality Sandwich, as well. On the nonprofit side we had 40 or 50 groups, mostly in the U.S., but also globally, which peaked in 2010. By 2012, the organization had reached an exhausted level, and we couldn't find financial donations to keep it going. So, I walked away. I was just so exhausted. I gave it to someone who wasn't that great at handling the project, so it sort of fell apart. But the model of having these groups as local nodes of alternative culture was really amazing. The idea of constructing a template for local groups to form feels to me like a good one.

I think one reason people are falling into this alt-right psychosis is because they're in these isolated towns, and there's nothing interesting happening. They're gravitating toward really negative ideologies, because that's their reaction to the bombardment of the media, which is so destructive.

What's your biggest motivator to keep working on these issues?

At this point, it's who I am. I don't know what else I would do. I'm fascinated to see what's possible. I've been lucky enough to be able to have a significant influence. In fact, a friend of mine just moved to Louisiana, and he's been working with a Shaman who has a community of over 100 people. The Shaman was excited to see on Facebook that this friend of mine and I were connected, because apparently he was inspired by my first book to pursue the work of shamanism. Through him, I've influenced those hundred people, and who knows how many more thousands he'll influence (or already has).

Russell Brand was also inspired by my work and wrote about me in his book, "Revolution." The worldview that he's put forward in his YouTube videos, The Trews, which have reached millions of people — I've helped to inform that. You can have a multiplier effect. There's no reason not to try.

What advice do you have for others?

At this point, I would say to look for those higher leverage points. I would say that everyone intuitively knows their own skills, talents and capacities. Well, not everyone knows, to be honest. But the more you can figure that out ... maybe your best skill is that you're great with plants, so you'll do rooftop gardening. Maybe you're an organizer, or maybe you're a lawyer and can use that skill for better causes. So, you look at yourself with almost a permaculture-like approach. Who are you, what skills have you got and what can you offer? And have a lot of forgiveness for yourself and others, because nobody is perfect.

Is there anything personal you do to reduce your impact?

I reduce my meat consumption. I toggle back and forth between vegetarian and mostly vegetarian. I don't have a car. I don't drive. I don't consume excessively.

What are your favorite things to bring with you everywhere you go?

My phone and my laptop. That's pretty much it.

Daniel Pinchbeck has just released a new book called "How Soon is Now?" It is available for purchase online or at your local bookseller.

Nature & Humanity Poems

Words
Yuna Winter

the ocean, beauty, monotony, life (i wrote a poem for you)

you are in a boat on the ocean. in the middle of the ocean. around you is salty ocean water and sky. you are in a boat in the middle of the ocean surrounded by water and waves. everything is moving. you are in a boat. the air is salty. the water is salty. everything is so salty you have forgotten the taste of salt. there are clouds. there is sea weed. there are fish. every wave around you is separate from every other wave. each wave exists and disappears. you are in a boat. you are surrounded by waves and clouds. you are surrounded by waves and clouds existing and disappearing. you are surrounded by the brief existence of uncountable waves and clouds.

you are in a boat in the middle of the ocean. you cannot see anything but the sky and the water. you are moving. it is beautiful. it is so beautiful you cannot see it. it is so beautiful it is monotonous. you see the monotony. you see one colour. you see two shades of one colour. you see the water. you see the sky. everything is moving. you are moving. everything and you are moving. every small piece is moving. you are in a boat in the middle of the ocean. you are being moved by the water. the water is being moved by the air. you are moving so much. so much is moving. everything is moving so much that you feel no movement at all. you feel immobile in the middle of the ocean in the middle of two shades of one colour. you are in a boat on the ocean. you are moving.

it is beautiful.

Photo
Chelsea Greene
@chelseagreenemachine

I.

a love letter to nature:

i'm so sorry i have fucked you up

i'm so sorry baby

i love you

i really do

i'm so sorry you are so fucked up right now

i want to help

i want to help make you better

please don't get angry

i love you

i can be better i promise

i can try harder

i can be a better person

for you

to you

please, just please listen

i didn't want to hurt you

and when i did what i did

i wasn't thinking about you

i wasn't thinking about our future together

and i'm sorry

it's just

i have no self confidence

and something that made you hurt

came along and made me feel better

for just a little bit

and yeah i felt guilty the whole time

and yeah i knew it wasn't permanent

or sustainable

but it made me feel better

just for a little while

and i just

i have no idea how to feel good the right way

but i feel like you are the right way

and please

just give me one more chance

i'm so sorry.

II.

i promise this could be a garden.

Yuna Winter is a poet and artist based in a tiny village in the South Okanagan region of British Columbia. Follow her @yunawinter.

Photo
Kyle Calian
@theregenerationmag

Left to Right
Rinat Sherzer and Hannah Phang

Rinat Sherzer & Hannah Phang

Founders of
Of Course Global

This year, Hannah and Rinat launched Of Course Global, a company with its sights set on integrating sustainability into their business models and products. We talked with them about taking risks, figuring out their methodology and getting companies excited about doing the work.

Photos and Interview
Kyle Calian

Q: Tell me a little bit about your education backgrounds.

HP: I majored in strategic design and management at Parsons the New School for Design. My main focus was marketing, PR and trend forecasting in the fashion industry. I also took a lot of environmental studies courses, so I started to build a foundation of sustainability there. I went back to school for my master's to gain an even deeper understanding of how fashion, design, business and sustainability intersect at a program called Design for Social Innovation at the School of Visual Arts.

RS: I studied biotechnology engineering at the University of Ben Gurion in Israel. During that time, I was fascinated by the intelligence of the systems that make up our body and became curious about applying that knowledge to create better human systems. After graduation, I worked in a few major startups developing digital platforms and then embarked on an entrepreneurial path. I wanted to bring my knowledge and experience in biology, technology and design to social impact, and that's how I got to study Design for Social Innovation with Hannah.

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something bigger?

HP: I always relate it back to my parents and the city that I'm from. My dad was a doctor and my mom was a nurse, and it was always my general understanding that the way you live your life is through helping other people. That was one wavelength. The other is being from Vancouver, which is such a nature-based and environmentally conscious city. It's this urban center embedded with trees, mountains and the ocean. Growing up there gave me an innate connection to nature. So, it was both knowing that what I should be doing in life is helping others, while also having that direct connection to the environment.

RS: Similarly (and also different), my dad is a huge environmentalist. He's a chemical engineer who developed a product that recycles industrial water. Growing up, I was influenced by that approach of using technology and engineering to make the environment cleaner. My mom was a high school vice principal who worked with underserved communities. Seeing her nurture those kids into young adults and help them live their full potential was really fundamental to who I was as I grew up. So, at the beginning of my life, I felt like there was a calling to do something bigger for others. Growing up in Israel, which is such a crazy place — full of conflict and pain, which affects every aspect of life there — really made me want to go out into the world and research how to do things differently. Ever since I was old enough to travel, I've been exploring other cultures and how to improve the world we live in.

When did you realize you wanted to work on sustainability?

HP: I worked in advertising — nothing sustainability related. After doing that for a year, I felt like I was really missing something. Spending my 9 to 5 selling people shit that they don't need just felt disingenuous. That was when I realized I needed to focus on sustainability full time.

RS: I was in advertising as well, working on the technology behind online advertising. I gained insights from the power and scale of this industry and felt that these should be applied to creating a better, more sustainable society. I thought, if all this talent could be steered toward solving wicked problems, we would all live in a radically more positive world. I decided to dedicate my work toward that.

Can you each describe your path to what you're doing now? When did you start Of Course Global, and what's the goal of the new project?

HP: We said, "OK. How can we take our education and experience in advertising, communications and business, and basically shift those industries to have a larger purpose in the world?" Our culture, in general, is also shifting in that direction. We just have a particular expertise that can make that shift happen. Going out for lunch one day Rinat goes, "Do you want to start something with me?" and I said, "Of course!"

RS: We thought, what if we could go into businesses and teach them how to make products using systems thinking, with a holistic 360-degree lens on how to create new products that align with their business goals, the needs of their communities and the natural systems of the planet?

The way we do this, however, isn't through

traditional consulting but through experiential learning. It's sort of the Trojan horse of getting into their space and changing the way they think about business, innovation and sustainability — by actually experiencing the impact they're creating. It's one thing to talk about it, but it's a whole different thing to experience it. It's transformational.

So what does that look like?

We facilitate workshops with our clients and create change together with them rather than doing it for them. We have CEOs going out into the field and talking to underserved communities to learn about their everyday challenges. It's really amazing to see how quickly they get the value of the work we do.

While we were building our methodology, we just kept saying, "Yes, of course." Like, of course businesses should operate this way. Of course we should do this type of workshop. At some point (after saying "of course" a thousand times), Hannah said, "Of Course — that's our name." So, that's how Of Course became Of Course.

Can you tell me about some of the clients you've worked with and some you're looking forward to?

HP: One of our main clients has been an e-commerce bedding company. They were actually looking to close down their business and go out with a bang. The CEO had always wanted to do something socially conscious but had never gotten around to doing it. We ended up doing some work with them on our core offering, the Social Sprint. It focuses on building a socially beneficial project that we then integrate into their business model through a five-day intensive program.

They wanted to work with community college students from low-income backgrounds. Through interviews they uncovered that many students didn't feel like they had the capacity to dream, because they were so bogged down just getting through the day-to-day of paying for school, helping their parents pay mortgages, applying for jobs, etc.

For the first prototype, we went into the community and did workshops to give them space to think about what their dreams actually are. During those workshops, we also had designers help them visualize their dreams onto pillows that they could then take home to literally dream on. What we are working on now is a product line where some of the profits will go back to help support those dreams.

After the Social Sprint, we got a lot of awesome feedback. Now, they're on this new path to becoming a social impact bedding company. In the long term, we are actually helping them develop a job-training program, so all their products are made by local homeless and low-income people.

On the horizon, we're starting to get more into the education space. We recently led a design-thinking workshop at Cornell, where we had a 10-hour sprint day to come up with a sustainable product. We just did a two-day workshop with Cooper Union, and we're also teaching a module at Bard's MBA in Sustainability program on Design Thinking for Sustainability.

RS: The beauty of the methodology is that it can be applied to any industry. Whether we're talking about big corporations or startups, we can actually go into any company in any industry and use this methodology to create products that have sustainability and social impact at their core. Our goal is for our clients' businesses to grow and prosper as a result of this work. It's not growth versus social impact, but rather a combination of those two.

"Our goal is for our clients' businesses to grow and prosper as a result of this work. It's not growth versus social impact, but rather a combination of those two. "

Take me through one of your workshops.

RS: The Social Sprint is a five-day intensive that we developed. We start off by working with the C-suite and a range of employees to identify any business challenges they are facing that we can address during the sprint. We also look at what social and environmental issues they feel really passionately about that align with their brand. If they're passionate about it, they'll be more invested in the process and want to see it thrive.

In the sprint, we start off by immersing ourselves in the community affected by the issue we identified. We get out there and interview as many people as we can and really get into their shoes. We then distill what the key insights are and where it would be best to intervene. We take the clients through workshops about ideating, decision making and systems thinking by looking at how each stakeholder is affected by these ideas.

We choose the solutions that are most beneficial for all parties involved. We always look for that win-win-win solution, where it's good for the business, good for the community and good for the environment. Once we've chosen that specific solution, we dedicate another day to creating a high-fidelity prototype and take it back to the community to test it out.

So, that's the Social Sprint. Afterward, we work with the company to really bring it to life: help develop it for the long term, detail its social impact, integrate its business model into the business ecoystem and revenue stream, and launch the campaign with the impact and exposure it deserves.

How do you monetize your services?

RS: There are a few ways we're doing this, the main one being project-based consulting. We charge for services as if we were consultants. The other business model is a partnership with these companies, where we have revenue share of new products and also some equity. We're really excited about the second one, because this

model will make us more viable — we'll have more skin in the game.

That's an awesome idea. What are some trends you're seeing in the industry?

HP: If you're going to start a business, you need to have a deeper purpose. Whether it's focused on sustainability or social good, the new norm in business is this expanded purpose from being profit driven to being purpose driven. It's now the cost of entry. Customers want to support businesses that align with their values. Employees want to work for companies that give them this fulfillment. Businesses are also feeling the financial return, as they're starting to consider more than just profits. It's no longer enough to have a separate [corporate social responsibility] department. It's really integrated into the core operations of the business.

RS: We've also been researching the space between capitalism and socialism. At Of Course, we want to measure success based on the positive impact we have, so equity will be distributed according to the shared success of everyone. It doesn't matter if you're a salesperson or a marketing person at Of Course. You'll still get equity based on collective impact.

It sounds like it could be tricky to measure impact that way. I'm curious to see how that pans out.

RS: We're in the initial steps of creating that structure. We're excited to create something that's not time based but impact based and gratifying for individuals and the whole.

HP: I think in general that's the shift or trend that's happening. It's so much less about competition and instead about collaboration. As separate businesses or individuals, we can achieve a lot more together than we can if we fight for it. There's this sentiment right now that if someone succeeds others have to fail.

"There's this sentiment right now that if someone succeeds others have to fail."

Do you ever feel like you're not doing enough? When that happens, what do you do?

RS: We were talking about this actually this morning. On one hand, we have this drive to do more and more, and on the other hand, an understanding that you can't change everything at once everywhere. So it's really having patience and being humble toward making changes that are bigger than us. It's this respect for the incubation period, where things need time underground before they can sprout.

HP: We're in the industry of never being satisfied. We can always be doing more. We're in the business of making the world a better place and attempting to shift every business on Earth away from solely trying to make profit. But that's exactly why we're doing it, because there's so much potential for growth.

What's your biggest motivation to keep working on these issues?

HP: I have a few. One stems from my upbringing — being fortunate enough to be born in a country with a high standard of living and into an understanding that you need to use your privilege for good. It's also a big motivation knowing that not everyone has the opportunity to do this kind of work, to try to solve these wicked problems. I don't want to waste all this on doing something that doesn't have meaning.

RS: For me, it also stems from my upbringing and growing up in a country with so much pain and devastation. I'm a grandchild of two Holocaust survivors. On the other side, my grandfather walked from Iraq when he was 14 to build a foundation, so he could save his family and bring them to Israel. Growing up from that heritage, my path has always been exploring how we grow out of that story, honoring the past and creating a better future, which is not tied down by the pain of the past.

Also, being a woman in the tech world and having very few other women with me at the top of the pyramid has really pushed me to work toward equality and understanding that we're all one, regardless of our sexual preference, gender or religion. I want to be a role model for women in this new generation. We need strong female leaders.

What advice do you have for others?

RS: What comes to mind is something my grandmother says to me a lot, "Everything in life is the way you see it and the exact opposite at the same time." Life is long and short at the same time, and the world is beautiful and cruel at the same time. Really the humility and humbleness to keep researching and exploring. We really don't know shit, and we

have to acknowledge that we don't know what we don't know. Be curious, keep developing and exploring. Stay the course of optimism and dare to go out there and try new things that haven't been tried.

HP: Along those same lines, if you find yourself on this path, know that it is very frustrating and difficult. It will feel like you're always fighting an uphill battle, but you're on the path for a reason and you're strong enough to lead it. Keep on keepin' on, and keep in mind why you're doing what you're doing. When you're struggling or backsliding into the draws of an average life, remember why you're doing it.

RS: Also, have a tribe. Being around like-minded people with shared vision strengthens and motivates you to keep going during those dark nights.

Is there anything personal you each do to reduce your impact?

HP: I'm ingrained with my background in sustainable fashion, so I'm always being mindful of the products I'm consuming and how I'm consuming — trying to actively close the values/actions gap. It's looking at every decision you make, being more mindful about things you instantly react to and stopping to think about what you're doing (mostly in the products you buy and the companies you support). You're voting with your dollar. It's both what you buy and also how you buy. Buying only things that you actually need. Repairing things instead of throwing them away. We've made it too easy to throw things away instead of repairing them because of planned obsolescence. So, invest in high quality things that will last a lot longer.

RS: It's about the culture in which we consume. I have this sentence I keep saying in my head, "Instead of hyper consuming products, hyper consume experiences." I've never had a TV, so instead of sitting down and consuming content that someone has paid to put into my brain so I can buy more stuff, I prefer to go out for a walk and enjoy the moonlight. That's the big reframe for me. I don't consume mainstream news. The reason I say this is because newspapers back in Israel induce so much fear in people. I refuse to feed off of that. I prefer gourmet news to junk food news. As a rule of thumb, if I know that the agenda behind the news is not for the greater good, then I don't consume it.

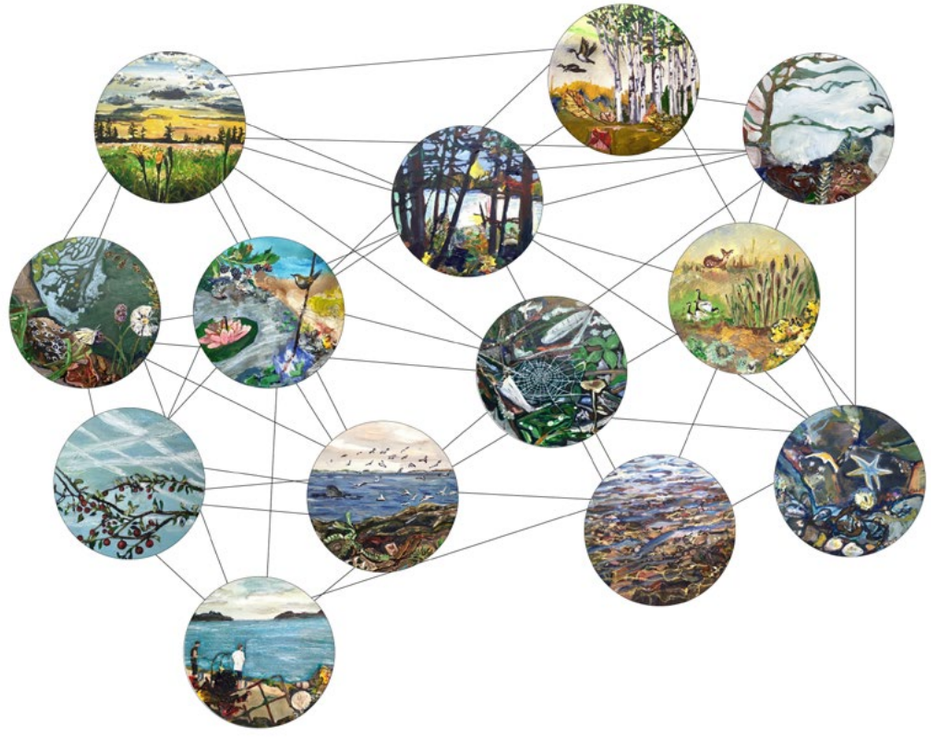
What's something you each bring with you everywhere you go?

HP: There are a few things. I always have my phone, and I usually have my reusable water bottle by Swell or Dopper, my coffee cup (a collapsable one from Stojo) and camping utensils from Patagonia.

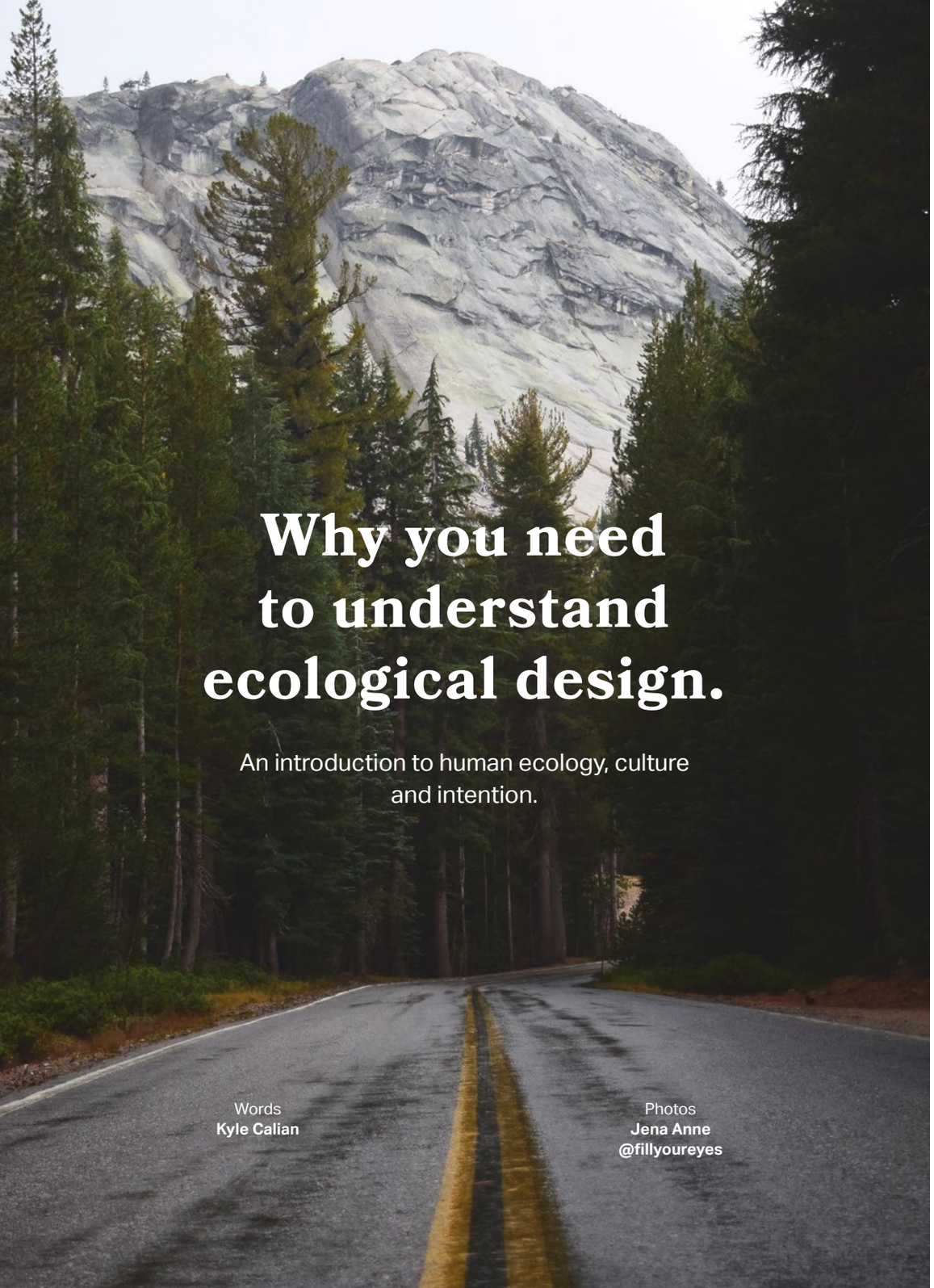
RS: I use my Dopper bottle, a Keep coffee mug and the thing I don't leave home without is my journal, which is where I document almost all of my experiences.

Of Course Global just launched their new website which can be accessed at ofcourseglobal.com

Follow their progress on social media @ofcourseglobal



Ecosystems
Richelle Gribble
@richellegribble



Why you need to understand ecological design.

An introduction to human ecology, culture and intention.

Words
Kyle Calian

Photos
Jena Anne
@fillyoureyes

When humans decide to create something in a particular place or time they focus on getting that thing done and rightfully so. Whether it's to benefit ourselves, our family or our community, we get our hands dirty, and at whatever cost we get the job done. We are a purpose-driven species and the greatest experiment this planet has ever seen.

What we do not see, when we do whatever it takes, is every externality of each decision that we make. When we aren't intentional and when we don't see ourselves as a small part of a whole, we get sloppy.

This is the source of many environmental problems. They are often unintended, unforeseen and ironic side effects of other intentions. We intend to raise cattle for hamburgers and end up destroying the rainforest in the process.

Our intention in this now global economy is prosperity and a decent quality of life for as many people as possible. But the results of our actions often contradict their original intent.

This, I believe, is the most difficult problem we face as a species.

As author David Orr wrote, "Environmental problems are a miscalibration between human intentions and ecological results — which is to say they are a kind of design failure."

We may believe that we can remedy this problem with global solutions, but we have made that mistake before (i.e. the Green Revolution). These are problems of place, rooted in knowledge of place, derived from patterns that exist in that place. We need to slow down and figure out what they are.

In the process of trying to achieve global prosperity we have created problems on a global scale, such as climate change and widespread pollution.

When we set out to solve problems, as designers do, we are faced with an entirely more complex set of analyses. We are not just trying to figure out how to make something tangible. We are also trying to remap the way that human ecology interacts with our biological systems. This is the biggest challenge designers will face in the 21st century.

We all become designers when we become intentional about how we think, how we act and how we create change. From the farmer who designs a resilient, waste-free closed loop system to the architect thinking about grey water reuse and capturing lost energy, we can all be good designers if we listen to people and acknowledge them as experts.

So, what is ecological design?

It is any form of design that minimizes environmentally destructive impacts by effectively adapting to and integrating with natures processes.

It is a synthesis of our intentions with the natural patterns and flow of the world we live in. Therefore, studying these patterns and flows can help us inform human

behavior. Pioneers in ecological design begin with the observation that nature has been developing successful strategies for surviving on Earth for 3.8 billion years and is a model for:

- Farms that work like forests and prairies
- Buildings that accrue natural capital like trees
- Waste-water systems that work like natural wetlands
- Materials that mimic the ingenuity of plants and animals
- Industries that work like ecosystems
- Product that become part of cycles resembling natural materials flows

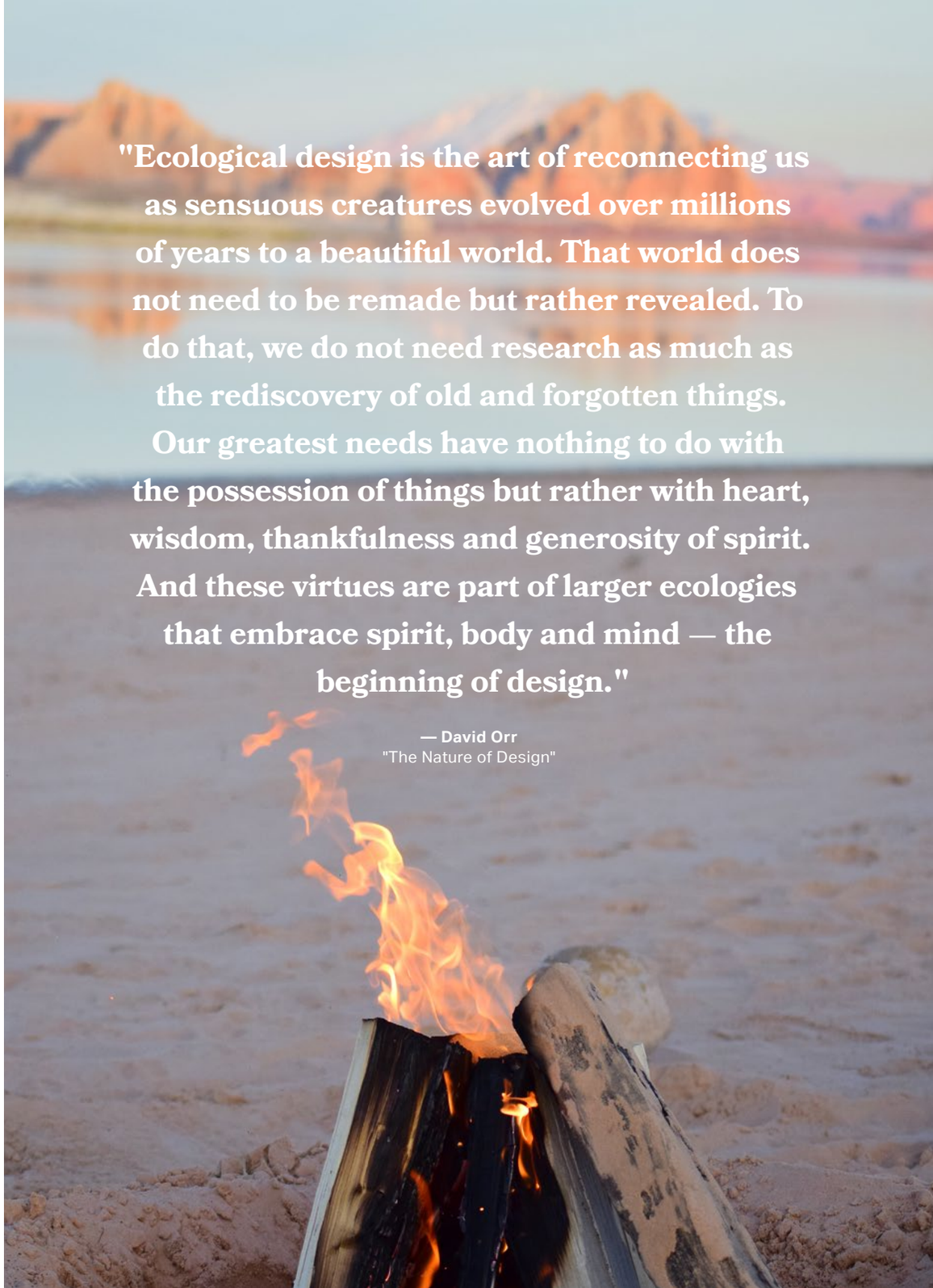
As William McDonough put it so elegantly, “Intention is the first signal of design.” And in order to make change, we must reconcile that our intentions have been driven by a culture of greed, self-preoccupation and mass consumerism. We need to shift our intentions from individual actions to our largest institutions.

We all need to cultivate a deeper sense of connection and obligation for our actions.

We will never be intelligent enough to understand the full consequences of everything we do. We simply can’t control every outcome of our choices. But we can set an intention to do the most possible good we can.

A real design revolution must foster a transformation of human intentions into ecological results.

Kyle Calian is the Founder and Creative Director of The Regeneration Magazine. You can read more of his personal writing on Medium at medium.com/@kylecalian



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Brittany Bobo

Founder of
sud & joy

After spending several years as a young designer and photographer not feeling completely fulfilled, Brittany started a small-batch soap company, so she could get her hands dirty (and then clean again).

Interview
Kyle Calian

Photos
Richard John and Brittany Bobo

Q: Could you describe your path to what you're doing now?

A: My career path as a designer stemmed from an interest in photography when I was younger. In high school, I took a lot of photography classes and joined the yearbook committee, which introduced me to this idea of graphic design. As my interest grew, I knew that design was the career I wanted to pursue. My passion led me to the Delaware College of Art and Design, where I studied for two years before transitioning to Pratt Institute and completing my Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in Communications Design.

I now work in the advertising industry as an interactive designer at Kargo, where I design, build and animate cutting-edge ad experiences for the mobile web.

How did sud & joy get started?

Since my work has been primarily digital for the last few years, I wanted to get back in touch with my craftier side and work on creating something tactile. I didn't know what I wanted that project to be, I just knew that I wanted to get my hands dirty and physically make something.

So, I kept my ears, eyes and heart open for any bit of inspiration that might spark that "a-ha" moment. To my surprise, I found it while grocery shopping.

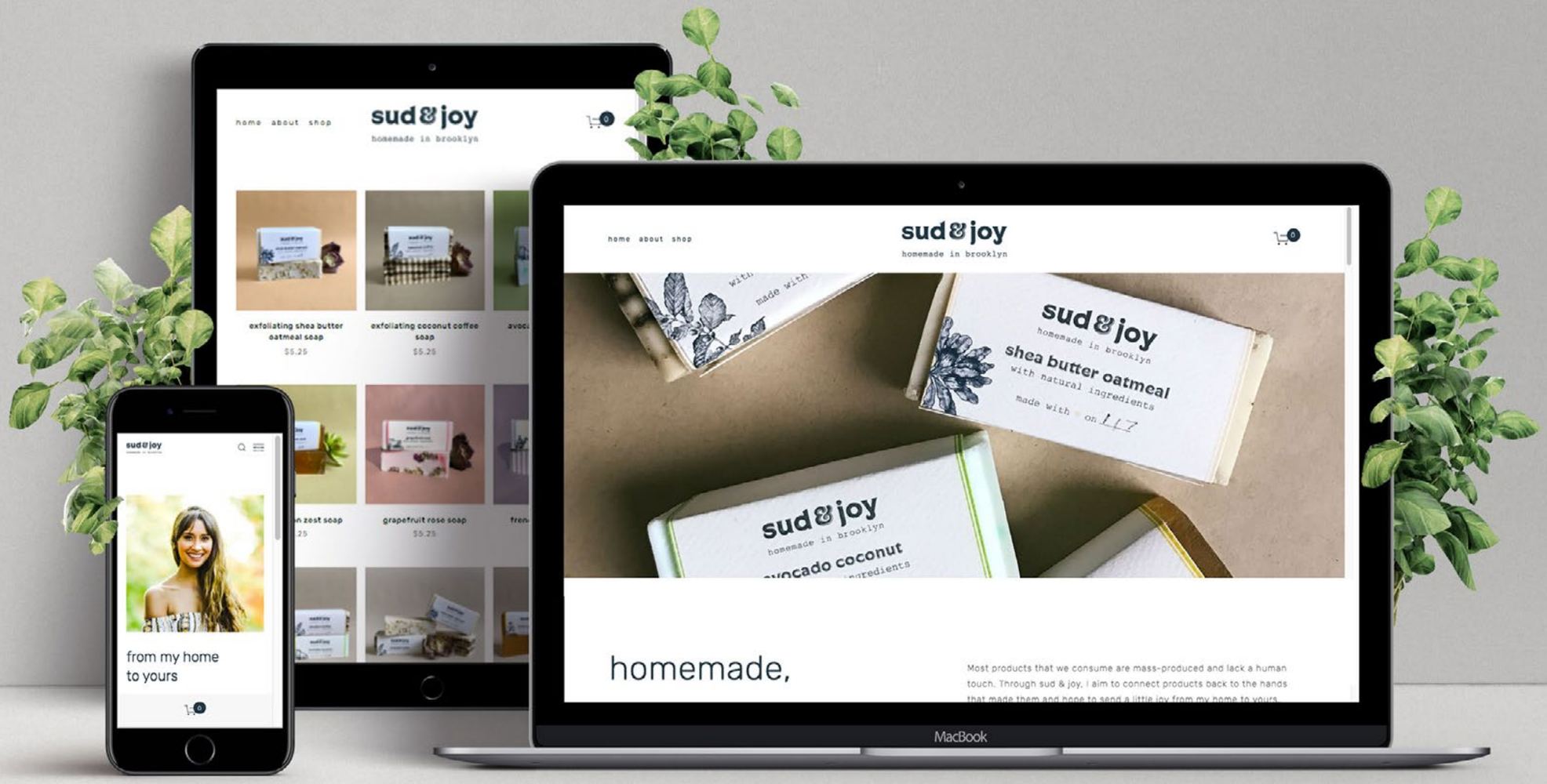
When I couldn't find my go-to bath soap for a couple weeks, I decided to pick up some new bath products. I then became curious about natural soap and asked myself "Could I make this on my own?" So, I did some research and next thing I knew, I was making my first batch. Then, I was sharing it with friends and family, and I was thinking about turning it into a small business. That initial moment of creative discovery sparked a bit of sudden joy for me, which later influenced the name, sud & joy.

When did you realize you wanted to create a sustainable business?

I don't think I made a conscious decision to create a sustainable business. It is just what felt right when I began creating my brand. A lot of small decisions regarding product ingredients, packaging, etc., all added up to a greater, more eco-friendly outcome. For example, all soap scraps are used — whether that means keeping them for personal use or cutting them up and creating small samples. I also recently reduced packaging materials, and have always made efforts to use recycled paper.

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something bigger?

I think a lot of kids and young adults hope to make a difference in their adult lives. I was definitely one of them. But when you're young, you're not exposed to, or cannot fully understand, the worldly issues that surround you. As I've gotten older, I've become much more aware and emotionally invested in some of the issues we face, and I feel more inclined to contribute to something bigger than myself.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homemade,
Most products that we consume are mass-produced and lack a human touch. Through sud & joy, I aim to connect products back to the hands
MacBook

Take me through an average day.

I'll walk you through a work day. I usually wake up 20 minutes after my alarm goes off (I love my sleep!) and check emails before climbing out of bed. After getting some reading in on the train, I get to work and take on a variety of campaigns for various brands, listen to a few hours of music throughout the day and sit in on a few meetings. I also make a point to go on a walk in the afternoon. I like to think of it as a mental reset. When I get back home around 7p.m., the work usually continues, whether it's freelance design projects or fulfilling soap orders (lately much more of the latter). After dinner and Netflix, I call it a night around midnight or earlier.

How can people get involved or purchase your products?

You can find more info about sud & joy, my process and all available products at sudandjoy.com. I'm continuously looking for ways to improve existing products and ideate new ones, so sign up to receive news and updates!

What are some trends you're seeing in the world of sustainability?

Practicing zero waste, reducing plastic waste and composting all seem to be getting more and more popular in the world of sustainability. It's really great to see so many individuals and businesses make small, positive impacts on the world.

“The exchange of love between earth and people calls forth the creative gifts of both. The earth is not indifferent to us, but rather calling for our gifts in return for hers – the reciprocal nature of life and creativity.”

— Elizabeth Gilbert
"Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear"

Who are some of your biggest influences?

My parents have always been a constant influence, of course. But outside of family, my influences change as I continue to consume more art, literature, etc. Right now, Elizabeth Gilbert, author of "Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear," has been a huge influence on my relationship with inspiration, creativity and life in general, as a creative.

I won’t tell too much, but I highly recommend it for anyone that works as a creative or aspires to live a more creative life, whatever that may mean to you. One excerpt that stuck with me is: “The exchange of love between earth and people calls forth the creative gifts of both. The earth is not indifferent to us, but rather calling for our gifts in return for hers- the reciprocal nature of life and creativity.”

Is there anything personal you do to reduce your impact?

I carry a canvas tote throughout the week and try to use as few plastic bags as possible. I became much more aware of plastic waste after working on a branding project for a decompostable plastic bag company. The statistics and numbers I found while researching for the project were staggering, and my findings really inspired me to reduce my impact. Sometimes that means carrying items home in my hands, but it’s nice to know that’s one less bag used.

What’s your favorite thing to bring along everywhere you go?

I always have a book with me. As soon as I finish one I take a break from work and head downstairs to Strand Books to grab my next read. Since I listen to music throughout the day while I work, it’s nice to unplug on the subway and dive into a good book. I’ve also found that I appreciate my surroundings much more when I don’t have headphones in.

sud & joy just launched their new website which can be accessed at sudandjoy.com

Follow their progress on social media @sudandjoy

Diamond

Words
Adriana Lentrichia

Photo
Qui Nguyen
@kiddownstairs

From a distance, the tapestry depicts a floating diamond in a vast foreign landscape. The dense, fluffy texture of the piece invites the viewer in to touch it, and even the most fiber-ignorant can understand that this came from a sheep. Wool can be the most personal item we own, coming in such direct contact with our skin. Yet, most fail to see the sheep and the farmer when they relate to it. With this piece, I hope to reintroduce people to that elemental part of wool.

The wool I used for this piece comes from Shakey Ground Farm in the small town of Charlotte, in northern Vermont. The farmers hold themselves to high standards when it comes to their Icelandic sheep, the land, their family and their customers.

I weave as a form of personal meditation. The 89 hours of repetitive work are my way of paying respect to the material and highlighting the beauty of the work it took to create this yarn. It is truly beautiful yarn, which means it came from happy sheep. After learning about Shakey Ground, I know that all of the humans involved were cared for as well.

As a maker, I have a responsibility to my materials and to all of the hands that were involved in their creation. This acquired knowledge fuels my gratitude, which gives me the patience to create a finished product I can be proud of.

When we create, we are creating much more than an object. We are creating communities and building systems of relationships between us and our environment. The days of the solitary artist, or craftswoman, are over.

With that ethos in mind, I became a part of the Generator maker-space when I moved to Burlington, Vermont, after completing my education in eco-sustainable fashion design at Parsons in New York. Communal incubators foster innovation and give creatives of different ages, backgrounds, talents and skills a chance to learn from and collaborate with each other. All these creative minds in one place are an amazing resource for any community and celebrate the importance of artists.

With this weaving, titled “Diamond,” I aim to show off the talents of my local farmers, as well as my skills as a maker. I hope to inspire others to practice a meditative handcraft. And I hope to inspire people to reconnect with the fabrics around them, to not just see objects but also stories.

Adriana Lentrichia is an artisan maker and craftswoman who works with small farms and sustainable textile producers.

Her work can be found on adrianalentrichia.com

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Josh Treuhaft

Founder of
Salvage Supper Club

Josh Treuhaft has hosted more than 25 educational and delicious dinners (in dumpsters). He joined us to talk about his educational journey and the importance of acting upon moral realizations.

Photos and Interview
Kyle Calian

Q: Describe your path to what you're doing now.

A: It's pretty circuitous. In terms of food waste, I went to an undergrad program at Oberlin that was very left leaning, so I was already thinking about some of this stuff. I started doing consulting jobs, but none of it was that satisfying or meaningful, so I went back to school to study industrial design.

When I got back from that, a friend was in the process of starting a compost business called NY Compost. He said to me, "We have a business. We need a designer." Turns out it wasn't really a business yet but a startup in every sense of the word. We sat down and started talking about the issue of food waste, and I was kind of shocked. He told me this story, which has always stuck with me.

He was working for a catering company that was doing a big event for this nonprofit. Bono was the keynote speaker, and he was up there talking about saving the world. Meanwhile, the caterers were behind the stage scraping plates full of food into a trash can — very fancy food, where people were paying $400 just to be there and eat. Most of it was being thrown away while a guy on stage was talking about eradicating HIV and starving children in Africa. My friend thought this was insane, and I realized how much that resonated with me.

That was a starting point for me. There has to be a better way to run that system, and can we get people who already care about these things to take action? At the same time, how can we get people who aren't as predisposed to care about this to feel like there's a place for them too?

At the first Salvage Supperclub we had a few menu items that were dumpster dived. When we discussed where the ingredients were coming from, we picked up a pretty serious threshold about food came from a dumpster. [Participants] didn't seem to care that we were eating in a dumpster, but the fact that the food had come from the trash was a barrier to converting a lot of the more mainstream audience. A lot of people can get behind the idea of eating a carrot peel or a broccoli stalk that has passed its expiration date. Using that feedback, I've really focused on trying to build something inclusive that everyone can connect with. That way, we can all address these issues together.

When did you realize you wanted to shift your focus to a more systemic problem-solving approach?

The composting startup ended up failing, but through that process I gained a lot of knowledge about food waste. I started doing advocacy, community building and policy change, organizing roundtable discussions and getting the stakeholders involved in these issues.

Along that path I had this realization that composting is great, and we absolutely need to keep organics out of the landfills. But in reality, there's a lot of food that needs to be eaten before it gets composted, and a lot of people who could be eating it.

"Along that path I had this realization that composting is great, and we absolutely need to keep organics out of the landfills. But in reality, there's a lot of food that needs to be eaten before it gets composted, and there are a lot of people who could be eating it."

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something bigger?

The last consulting job I had before I went back to school was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back. I was doing a project for a consumer packaged goods company that makes a lot of money selling powdered sachets that people put in their water.

They started seeing behavior around water consumption changing. There was a backlash to bottled water afoot, and they were a little bit scared about their business. They hired us to help them understand consumer opinions about bottled water and to kickstart a product innovation process. I was really digging in and learning so much about the costs and energy inputs of bottled water, and I started having ethical issues. I didn't want to help these guys figure out how to get more people to buy bottled water or packaged products. The genie was out of the bottle for me. It is really staggering when you see something like that. It's hard, but there's this massive design opportunity too.

There are a lot of companies trying to do this better, like Keep cups or even water bottle companies like Nalgene or Sigg, who are saying let's use more durable products instead of all this flimsy single-use plastic. There are a lot of challenges, mostly systemic, that I'd like to orient my work toward solving or at least work on in a productive way.

When did you first realize you wanted to work on sustainability?

I think when I was really young, I didn't yet. There are a few special people who have parents that are real fireballs and spark something in their kids. We can't all be Malala. When we're in our formative years, we're figuring it out. When I really changed, I think, was in my undergrad program at Oberlin – moving from the suburbs and the Dave Matthews and the drinking in basements on weekends to being in a place that was way more diverse and had a history of civic action and developing consciousness. That environment was where things really started to change for me. The position of privilege that I grew up with was challenged in some ways, being exposed to new ideas, to professors that help shape you and to friends with different experiences.

"You just can't go back to doing dumb crap and [making] products that are just going to fester in a landfill."

I should've listened to my conscience then, but I had a one-track mind about getting a job after school and ended up working for consulting firms doing projects with companies like Kraft and Unilever. I kept turning away from that voice inside of me that was saying, "What are you doing man? Yes, this is a stable job, but are you doing something that you really care about?" That eventually bubbled over, and I realized that I couldn't go on doing work I didn't feel passionate about.

Was it at Oberlin that you studied industrial design?

Interestingly enough, I studied economics and philosophy of religion at Oberlin, but I went back to graduate school to study industrial design in Sweden. Sweden definitely shaped me in a lot of ways, too. Human-centered design was very much happening there 30 years before it really got going on a global scale.

They were teaching rapid prototyping and testing for user needs really early on. Plus, in Scandinavia, they are very conscious about their environmental impact. Being there got me reading "Cradle to Cradle" and Victor Papanek. All of the sudden the responsibility of the designer starts popping into your head all the time. Once you're aware of this stuff, it's really hard to turn it off. You just can't go back to doing dumb crap and [making] products that are just going to fester in a landfill.

Who have been some of your key mentors along the way?

I think this world is filled with inspiring people. I would say Kate Hanisian and Ramsey Ford are two of them. Before I got my graduate degree and after the composting company, I went on a fellowship designing low-cost farm tools for small, older farmers in rural India. The fellowship was run by a company called Design Impact, of which Kate and Ramsey are the founders. They're a husband and wife team. They call it embedded design, and they themselves were living in India for several years working with nonprofits on projects. They wanted to scale the project, so they opened up a fellowship for five people and embedded them in communities. I was in the first cohort of fellows.

The two of them are just really amazing humans, humble in the right ways and very good at connecting with communities. They weren't there as consultants that were just going to listen to your problems and give you a solution. They really became part of the community. As leaders and as people, they had this level of humility that made you want to be a part of what they were building. They really carved out a formidable place in my mind about the role of design in the social sector.

Social design is still very young, and they knew that they were at the forefront of this new discipline. So, they really tried to equip everyone working on these projects with the tools they needed to be successful. They're still running Design Impact in Cincinnati, and now it's more focused on that community. I'm just inspired everyday by what they're doing.

Cheryl Heller is a really inspiring figure to me too, and I'm grateful to her for helping me grow as a designer. She has the ability to boil things down to something incredibly clear. It's rare to meet people who can do it as well as she does. She gave me a lot of opportunities, and I'm thrilled to call her a mentor and friend.

"They really became part of the community. As leaders and as people, they had this level of humility that made you want to be a part of what they were building. They really carved out a formidable place in my mind about the role of design in the social sector. "

Mia Osaki was also one of my core mentors at DSI. She runs Diagram, which is a healthcare design studio with Tina Park, her business partner. She was instrumental in the formation of my thesis. She really helped me think about the design implications of the work I was doing.

Can you tell me how Salvage Supperclub came to fruition?

When I came into DSI, I was anticipating working on food waste for my thesis and was thinking pretty significantly about composting. How do we increase participation and motivate people to care? I started to build prototypes that focused on behavior around waste. [I found that] actually, if we look at the hierarchy of the severity of these issues, composting and waste energy are relatively low. We should be reducing waste at the source, before thinking about composting and turning waste into energy.

I've been spending all this time [trying] to convince people to compost more, but if instead we got everyone in New York City to compost less, if they realized that a lot of the stuff they're throwing in that bin is still edible, we'd save more energy and be more resource efficient. There are around 75 million people who are food insecure in the U.S. alone, nevermind the billions of people around the world. So, I thought maybe if we focus on the step above composting and get people to think about this issue in a way that is more compelling [we would be] capable of changing attitudes and behaviors on the consumer level and at a systems level. As a designer, your direct influence on a consumer and user will eventually have an effect on the entire system.

Food is something that people care about — they're spending a lot of money on expensive meals and taking pictures of their food. If that's something that's important to my target audience, then how do I work with that in a way that is compelling and meaningful to them?

One day my wife was juicing, and you end up with all this macerated dried out vegetable and fruit. I said to her, "I wonder what that tastes like," and just ate a spoonful of it. It was really bad, truly awful. I snapped a photo and put it on Instagram and said, "Anyone ever wonder what this stuff tastes like? I ate it. It's gross. Anyone have any idea what we could do with it?" All of the sudden there were a bunch of people commenting with ideas, like turning it into a slaw. There was just so much more engagement, because it was food engagement and not waste engagement.

What if we could do interesting stuff with food that would've gone to waste in a way that is delicious, visual, experiential, communal and sensory? That's a win there. So, that was my first prototype. We could do a dinner using different sources of food and see how people react. Each event has been a prototype in its own way. Does the aesthetic look like super crunchy granola or does it look like fine dining? What is the language we use? Is it

"All of the sudden there were a bunch of people commenting with ideas, like turning it into a slaw. There was just so much more engagement, because it was food engagement and not waste engagement. It was focused on the thing that was going to go to waste unless we did something about it. "

too much to dumpster dive? What are the concerns people have? Then, we start to shape the experience.

What happens during a Salvage Supperclub? Who have some of your partners been?

The Salvage Supperclub Dumpster Dinner Party, is a fancy dinner inside of a dumpster. We get a host, someone who will open up their home and their kitchen to do all the prep and the service. For the first hour the guests show up at the house for a cocktail party in the living room.

Before the dinner starts, I'll do a welcome with the chef. We'll talk a bit about the experience and lay some ground rules. We talk about where the food came from for that meal and the partners, usually nonprofit food rescue organizations that feed the homeless or needy. We donate a percentage of the profits from every meal to those initiatives.

Then, we gather at the 16-person communal table. It's this nice rustic farm-wood dining experience that doesn't feel grimy or dumpster-divey. We start bringing out courses and talk about the preparation process for each dish. At the end, we send recipes to everyone. It's kind of like a learn and do. You learn about all of the different parts of the vegetable or the things you can buy after their expiration date.

What kind of results have you seen?

"It's not just about the 16 people in the dumpster. It's also about sending a message out in the world that resonates and starts to shape the national and international dialogue about how we should spend our time and resources and treat the food that we're investing so much energy growing."

I've been shocked by the amount of emails I've gotten from attendees.

For example, someone had the realization that when they sauteed [wilted greens] they would wilt anyway, so it didn't really matter. Or people who were grocery shopping and started looking at all the fruits and vegetables equally, not just the ones they were conditioned to pick because they were perfect. You don't need the shinier apple. They're all pretty great apples.

That's the stuff we're hoping for.

The corollary to all of this is that it's an interesting idea, and we got a lot of media coverage. It's really helped get the story out there. We did something in a big public way, normalized this topic and showed that people were interested. This was a way to repackage something that society had devalued into something people totally get. It's not just about the 16 people in the dumpster. It's also about sending a message out in the world that resonates and starts to shape the national and international dialogue about how we should spend our time and resources and treat the food that we're investing so much energy growing.

I think Salvage Supperclub is just one example of a system where we can think harder about the implications of our design decisions and close all these systemic loops. In the long run, that's what I want the majority of my work to be on — working with interdisciplinary teams addressing those materially inefficient challenges.

Switching gears, can you talk to me about Arup?

Arup is a multi-disciplinary consulting firm focused on the built environment — cities, buildings, infrastructure, some architecture and planning. They have 50 different disciplines, and they use those skills for a range of projects. Arup was the prime consulting firm for the Second Avenue Subway in New York City. It's an employee-owned company, so we have no Wall Street expectations about how we spend our money. We can try to live our values, and we can work on projects that are important to employees and those we feel are important to society. Shaping a better world is Arup's mission.

My team is a quirky little team called Foresight Research and Innovation. It started as a way for Arup and its clients to think about the way the world is changing. The context of the world in a 20-year project is going to be very different from the time it starts to the time it finally opens to the public. It's important to have a team that is going to think about the drivers and trends that shape society. We help Arup with strategic planning and envisioning.

What are you working on at Arup?

There are a range of projects happening around the globe — Arup has 14,000 employees and 92 offices all over the world. We're working on a lot of projects about circular economy

right now, which I'm particularly excited about. Whether it's here in the U.S. or abroad, Arup tackles the issues we're facing in our cities from a policy standpoint, helping developers or planners figure out how circular economy pertains to their projects.

A concrete example of this kind of thinking reminds me of a group of our colleagues in London who built this thing called the circular house. It was a physical demonstrator of various principles of how we could design buildings in the future that are more circular. Getting things like that happening here is really important. People might be willing to try it and learn. It's kind of like Salvage Supperclub or any innovation — you learn by building and rebuilding.

What are some trends you're seeing in sustainability?

In cities, stormwater management has become really important. A lot of green and blue infrastructure projects are on the rise to help manage water effectively. Anytime there's a storm event here in New York City, it overflows our sewer system. When that happens, because our waste water and toilet water is combined in that same sewer system, the system becomes inundated and begins spilling raw sewage directly into the river. That's vestigial. It's just the way the system is designed. If we could make the city more permeable — collecting rainwater and making it

useable by putting it into a bioswale for parks or allowing it to dissipate slowly, rather than inundate our systems — we can protect our environment.

Resilience is another big one. Arup thinks about fortifying the city from storm surge, but there's also community resilience. It's less about the physical stuff and more about the connection between people.

Biophilia is another. It's how nature actually has a huge impact on people's health and well-being, and developers are starting to take notice. There are consulting firms like Terrapin Bright Green whose work is amazing. Terrapin is funded by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority — that's government money that is helping them find biomimicry cases that, with additional research and development, can be immediately actionable to actually solve cities' problems.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation wanted to start these growth hubs to have co-working space, co-building space and a focus on new businesses trying to solve urban challenges. That's one way the government is actually supporting the growth of innovation ecosystems, which is another big trend. Sometimes, you just need to enable the market by providing the funding and space for creatives to solve problems. I would like to see more of this stuff happening: encouraging people, clarifying what we want our cities to become and then raising those entrepreneurs up so they can do that work.

Is there anything personal you do to reduce your impact?

I can get really specific if you want. I'm not a freegan, and I try not to be militant about my beliefs, so I'm not too fringe or too heavy handed. I do some weird stuff on my own. I often shower in the dark and take military showers — turn the water on and off to soap up and wash off, to reduce the amount of water I use. I think it's just become a habit after India, where I was taking bucket baths.

Any non-edible food waste that comes out of my house I compost. Because we don't have curbside residential pickup in New York City, that means I take a bag of frozen food scraps on the train multiple times a month. At work I do something similar. I have a couple compost collection bins around for me and colleagues that I collect and bring to the local farmers market.

I don't have a car. I ride a bike when I can, which is also a convenience thing in New York. I don't eat red meat. I've done vegetarianism. Animal agriculture, in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, is the worst now. If you just avoid eating meat and dairy, you're radically reducing your carbon footprint, as well as saving tons of resources, because they're clear-cutting rainforests to make way for cattle farms, which requires tons of water and fertilizers. So, I flit in and out of being vegetarian.

I don't drink bottled water and rarely drink bottled beverages. Ideally, I'd be able to shop at a grocery store that was packaging-free. I've been trying to get my wife on board to do a month of no packaging and see how much of a sacrifice it really is. If we're bringing our own containers for stuff and buying bulk, I want to know, would it be a huge time suck or could we do it easily?

What's your favorite thing to bring everywhere you go?

My phone and my brain and my secret tote bag. More information on that later on.

The Salvage Supper Club Dumpster Dinners happen only a few times a year.

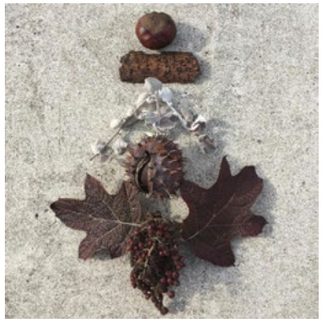
Follow them on social media to find out when their next event is happening @salvagesupperclub

"Sometimes, you just need to enable the market by providing the funding and space for creatives to solve problems. I would like to see more of this stuff happening: encouraging people, clarifying what we want our cities to become and then raising those entrepreneurs up so they can do that work."



The Knowing Place

Words
Schulyer Brown


Inside every woman there is a
Knowing Place.

No one has access to this precious
garden but her;

not her mother, not her lover, not
her children ...

The gates open only to her touch,
with her key, at her command.

Inside this fortress,

(which rumor has it lies in the vicinity
of the heart and hasn't much to do
with the head)

she finds the answers to all life's questions.

Inside, all mysteries are revealed,
confusions calmed, anxieties alleviated ...

Because this place contains the
wisdom to see her through the
seasons of her life;

to carry her across the turbulent waters.

When a woman is in her Knowing Place
nothing can shake her certainty
and conviction.

Not a single fact, no data point,
no reasoned argument.



She cannot be swayed when she is safe inside this sacred spot, because she is standing on solid ground.

When a woman is in her Knowing Place she can whisper her worries into the wind or throw her frustrations into the fire.

From that vantage point she sees the path clearly. She hears a response to all of life's laments: the why me's, the what ifs and what now's that plague her.

And it sounds like this, "Everything, my dear, everything is perfect. This — all of it — is as it was meant to be. Trust."

She is shown the way forward (by her own highest self, as it turns out) and then re-emerges into the world rid of her overwhelm and blocked vision; rid of self pity and self hatred. Heaving sighs of relief and conviction, she wipes her tears and lifts her head and moves ever onward, ever upward.

What's sad is that most women have forgotten the way to their Knowing Place.

(Indeed, many women aren't even aware it exists.)

We are all born with this gift, but it is slowly taken away from us by the doubts and denials of others, by a culture

crippled by reason and a fear of all that makes a woman a magical creature.

Some intrepid seekers recover their Knowing Place before it is completely eroded. And though it can be sad to encounter such a once-splendid place in a state of ruin and atrophy … take heart! It can always be restored. Nature's healing power is unleashed in the light of awareness.

Here is a secret, sisters … your pain is the gateway. Stop numbing it, for it is the source.

It is a lucky woman who is sent searching inside herself for this forgotten treasure.

No doctor, no teacher, no sage can tell a woman where to find it. She must venture in on her own, because all else outside has failed.

The trigger is usually something severe: heartbreak, grief, despair, pain.

Something about which others will say, "Oh, I'm so sorry!" and "That's just awful!"

But, they don't understand that what she's been given in that lost love, that last goodbye, that diagnosis, is a key: the key to a world of knowing, once again, what she needs and how she wants to be cared for.

It's the key to healing and the alchemy that transforms suffering into pure light.

Because The Knowing Place eats pain for breakfast, devours worries as snacks and dines on the gravest doubts. It transforms this food into tolerance, resilience, forbearance and acceptance. It transforms her from what others want her to be into what she has always known she is.

This is why a woman retreats when she is in pain … not to hide, not to unburden the world, but to seek that place of solace and healing inside where she knows what she needs.

Most women spend a lifetime looking outside themselves for certainty and never find it.

They're looking in the wrong place.

A note from the author:

I originally wrote this piece for a group of women who are chronic migraine sufferers. In talking to them for several days during a pharmaceutical marketing summit, I realized how thoroughly they'd been stripped of their intuitive sense of their bodies and healing needs. Most of these women had received perfectly adequate care but had suffered traumatic indignities along the way — mocked, ignored, humiliated and disempowered by a medical system that doesn't honor women, their bodies or feminine qualities of knowing.

The pain was so present, and the failure of science to tame it so frustrating. I felt them searching for something primal: not answers, but a deeper understanding. We'd been dancing around the topic of (what I'd call) spirituality for two days. It was a professional meeting, so no one was going to bring up God or (God forbid) The Goddess. I was aware of this taboo, but also clear about the need for a new language around intuition. Many of the women were so out of touch with their own, that the mere mention of it elicited discomfort.

In my own journey, I've found that conceiving of a geography of the body has helped me locate and "travel to" areas I need when I seek a deeper understanding of my experience: Are these feet on the ground? What does my gut tell me about this situation? What creativity is brewing in my womb? Can I tenderly hold the distressed child who lays curled up under my right ribs? The Knowing Place became my name for the deepest part of my soul, the place I go to when I am confused about what I need, about boundaries or about big decisions. For me, it is a garden that lies somewhere behind my heart, illuminated by the light from my crown and third eye. It is a channel, perhaps, more than a place.

On our last morning together I read this aloud to the room of 25 women. There were tears of recognition and familiarity, and also of yearning. One woman said to me wistfully, "I want a Knowing Place." And of course, I reassured her, "You have one."

This was written for women, but men have a Knowing Place, too. We all do. And it's time we learn to find our way there, so we can take the ego out of the driver's seat for a change. We have reached the limits of what rational materialism can solve. Let's all breathe a sigh of relief and raise a glass to the steady pleasure of **knowing.**

Schulyer Brown is a teacher, writer and founder of the foresight innovation company Sightful. She is based in New York City.

Water bottle on a mission.

Dopper wants to live in a world where people are aware of the environment, where we actively reduce single-use plastic waste and where everyone, close to home and far away, has access to safe and fresh drinking water.

The Dopper community has been spreading worldwide at high speed since its introduction in 2010. There are many ways you can contribute to the reduction of plastic waste and help provide everyone with safe and clean drinking water.

Dopper is a social enterprise. Our goal is not to make a profit – we want to make a positive impact for a better world. Therefore, we look at the impact that our product has and use the Cradle-to-Cradle concept. We maximize recycling and minimize destruction.

Check them out at:
dopper.com

Andrea Sanders

Founder of
Be Zero

After ten years teaching mindfulness and yoga, Andrea started Be Zero, a nonprofit focused on living your values and tackling the misconceptions about zero waste with program ambassadors around the world.

Interview
Kyle Calian

Photos
Jena Anne
@fillyoureyes

Q: Describe your path to what you're working on now.

A: What I'm doing now is about reconnecting individuals to what they value. How can we bring more value into our lives? How can we see things as more valuable? We've been so disconnected from our waste. This disconnection has us not valuing materials anymore — the things we buy or the clothes we wear or the communities we live in, the resources we take advantage of every day.

When did you start really thinking about the value of things?

I spent a lot of time before Be Zero in meditation and yoga. I spent 10 years teaching mindfulness meditation, and one of the things I learned was the idea of developing a relationship with my own mind and developing relationships with the things around me. I had to ask myself, what is my relationship with myself, with the people around me, with nature. Where was I disconnecting, and how could I rebuild those relationships?

I thought about my grandparents a lot, how they used to live and how much they appreciated the things they owned. I came to realize there was this lost sense of value in things. I would buy some fast-fashion cheap clothes that would rip a couple days later, and I wouldn't think anything of it. I started to really piece all this stuff together for myself, and that helped me see this collective disconnect. It's not that we don't know, or we don't care. I think we've just become unplugged. My work is getting people to plug in and rethink these concepts for themselves.

When did you start working on sustainability issues?

When I was 14 growing up on the Gulf Coast of Florida, I was really interested in the environment and was getting really upset when people in the neighborhood cut down trees. There was a local marine life research center called Mote Marine Laboratory. They had a volunteer program that gave me the tools and resources to talk to the community, and I really fell in love with it. I loved sharing knowledge about nature, framing it in a way that was interesting for people and seeing [their] reactions to being around marine animals for the first time. That was when doing this work really started to settle in my mind.

How long have you been zero-waste?

Since 2007, when I started the journey. That was around the same time Bea Johnson started her blog, Zero Waste Home. I had stumbled across that, and it was just such a gasp, oh my goodness — here I am teaching environmental conservation, and yet look at all this waste I'm making at home.

Nothing I was doing at home had any connection to what I was teaching, so that was definitely a wake-up moment. I wasn't putting all my trash in a jar in 2007, but I was definitely starting to really think about what I was purchasing and where things came from.

What about some of the misconceptions around zero-waste?

I think when people hear the phrase zero-waste they automatically think they can't make any trash. They get stuck on the word zero. In our culture we create these boxes and labels, so if you don't do all the things according to this societal label, you don't belong. Zero waste is just an industrial term that refers to a type of economy that has to do with designing things that don't produce waste as an end product. Some people call this the circular economy, some call it zero waste.

When I tell people this, they're usually very relieved. We live in a linear economy. Our global infrastructure right now is based on planned obsolescence and designing things [to be] repurchased. So, you're going to make trash. It's going to happen in some capacity. There is no foolproof, perfectly ethical way to to do this, because the infrastructure that surrounds us isn't built for a circular economy. It's beautiful to think about, but we're just not there yet.

All I'm focusing on is getting people to rethink their waste, reduce their waste, become empowered consumers and empower their communities. It's about re-plugging in and swatting away the misconception that you cannot make any waste or ever touch plastic again.

Meet people where they are, and let them know that wherever they're at is OK. Do something. Be intentional. Be Mindful. Be Compassionate. Don't worry if not everything is aligning. Doing something is better than not doing anything.

Walk me through an average day.

I work for myself, so I usually wake up slow. I love to make coffee at home, or my husband and I will grab our to-go cups and head to the local coffee shop — my favorite being Alpine Modern. I try to write in my notebook before I jump on my laptop, or I'll do some art. Then, I usually have meetings with people in the community or participate with other nonprofits. I also do a lot of orientations with the Be Zero ambassador program. I'll take a break in the afternoon and get back to work at night.

What about prep-work for meals?

I try to make my food very simple, especially during the wintertime. I focus on cooking root vegetables like sweet potatoes and potatoes, onions and carrots. Since I don't usually buy food in packaging, I add those root vegetables to dried stuff like rice, quinoa or pasta. I'm a big fan of the one-skillet meal. The less I have to do the better.

I freeze a lot of vegetables in the summertime, so those are really easy to dethaw — everything from kale to pesto, peppers and tomatoes. I always have fresh summer vegetables in the middle of winter. One of the biggest things I've learned from shifting to a more circular mindset is to be resourceful. You don't need to spend a lot of time if you utilize tools like pressure cookers or cast iron skillets and think about how quickly you can prepare a really good meal without producing any waste.

How did you start Be Zero?

I was doing this mindfulness exercise to reduce my own waste but didn't talk about it very much. I remember it very clearly. I was standing in the kitchen and said to myself, "I'm going to do this. I'm going to share this with everybody, now." So, I retired from teaching yoga and meditation and just started. Anything that I wasn't fully doing, I had to commit to from that point on. That moment was really powerful. The universe was saying to me, you need to do this now. I started to do in-home consultations, and I realized that the best way to spread this work was to turn it into a nonprofit.

Can you tell me more about Be Zero and the ambassador program?

Our mission at Be Zero is to inspire, educate and activate individuals to dramatically reduce their plastic and trash footprint, and to create simple and sustainable habits.

Our education programs engage individuals, families and communities to rethink their consumer and lifestyle habits and to activate their personal power to address growing environmental impacts, such as global trash, plastic pollution, climate change and overconsumption.

One things we do is called the Trash Diet Workshop, which is a four-hour workshop I host in my home with about five participants. We go over the history of waste — how we weren't always wasteful. We take a tour of my home to see how I organize things, the products I use, the foods I eat. We make things like toothpaste, almond milk and cleaning supplies. It's really fun and conversational. People get to see firsthand how we live without a trashcan and that we live in a relatively modern way. I'm not churning my own butter or weaving my own clothes. We're just trying to show people that we you don't necessarily need to be the capital letter Environmentalist.

We also have an Ambassador Volunteer Program, which is sort of community, mentorship and activism rolled together. I started this so I could begin to build networks around the U.S., and around the globe. Ambassadors apply online and through an orientation are trained in the Be Zero mission and philosophy. They help translate infographics and spread information in their communities. We have ambassadors in Bangalore, Beijing, Manchester, Trinidad and Tobago, New Zealand, Canada — really all over. Our goal for them is to be little lighthouses for this circular mindset. Because we're a new nonprofit, we don't have all the funding. I'm hoping to expand down the line to provide them with more funding to do better, more impactful work. Some ambassadors create social hours. We're having them in five different cities right now here in the U.S. They're just monthly get togethers for the community to share tips and advice, where they can introduce this stuff to people who don't know anything about it. I also give talks and table around the community and at farmers markets.

"Producing less trash does more than just help the environment. By moving from a disposable consumer lifestyle to a reusable consumer lifestyle, you'll simplify your belongings, create healthier and more meaningful experiences, and become an informed and empowered consumer."

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something greater?

Yes, I think I was born to be a planeteer. I think between Reading Rainbow (I was enamored with that show) and Bill Nye the Science Guy ... that show really just turned my life around. People have always thought of me as the girl who loved the environment. People who know me, know that's who I am.

Who other than Captain Planet and Bill Nye have been some of your biggest influences?

It might sound weird, but Walt Disney. I loved the way he used storytelling. I actually worked for Disney in my late teens. I love how he could tell a story, and people would fall in love with it. When I do things, I try to tell a story in a creative way, in the way that can change people. I know [Walt Disney] was not a perfect person, but he was a talented storyteller and he taught me a lot about using your imagination.

Do you ever feel like you're not doing enough? When that happens, what do you do?

I used to feel so held down. I would be at the grocery store with all of my cloth bags and see the person in front of me with everything in plastic produce bags, every possible plastic packaged food and plastic water bottles. It's hard not to point the finger. How can I do something without being rude, and how can I spread this message on a larger platform? For myself, there was this guilt I would put on myself if I got a straw or if someone gave me a package or present. Or I just wanted something that came in packaging. It was overwhelming, and I realized that I was driving myself crazy. There are so many ways to exist and be and to still be a benefit to society. Sometimes we want everyone to do all the same things. Someone asked me the other day, "If everyone became zero-waste, would that change the world?" Yes, of course it would. But it would definitely not be the only way to live. I think it's about being flexible and balanced. Not worrying [about] doing all the things has given me such relief and the space to do better work.

It's hard. It can sometimes feel like you work day and night and aren't getting anywhere. What's your biggest motivation to keep working on these issues?

People have to realize that we're planting seeds. You may not get to cultivate them right now, or maybe not even in this lifetime, but everything you do will have an impact as long as it's done with good intentions.

I mean the Earth is so freaking amazing. My motivation is this outstanding, crazy beauty that exists. I think my motivation is that we can't have this much disregard and disrespect. It's all really new in a lot of ways. Indigenous people have always had this reverence and connection with the planet. I want to bring the planet and people closer together. Just sitting here looking at my aloe plant, I'm just blown away by how cool it is. Where did it come from, and how did it evolve to be the way it is? If I cut it and put it on my skin, it heals cuts and burns. Sometimes it feels like stupid awe, but I think that's what we need.

What advice do you have for others?

Be an example. Don't worry about being a perfectionist. Don't worry about trying to convince everyone. There's a real lack of authenticity right now. We need to have conversations, even if we disagree with people. Remember that whatever you do, do it with compassion and intention and with whatever resources you have. Start there.

What's your favorite homemade thing?

I'm really obsessed with these coconut peppermint patties. They are so good. I always end up eating them as I'm making them, so I've never had enough to share. They're basically coconut oil with peppermint and a little agave or honey. You mix it up. Then, you dunk it in dark chocolate and let it freeze. They are the York peppermint patty of my dreams.

What's your favorite thing(s) to bring with you everywhere you go?

It's my traveler's notebook. I've had it for nine years. It's been all around the world with me. It's pretty much in my hand most of the day. It's a notebook that has a customizable elastic band, and I can add or replace notebooks within it.

Be Zero Waste is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit based in Colorado. If you're interested in being a Be Zero Ambassador or working with Andrea, fill out an application at bezero.org

Follow Andrea on social media for tips on living zero waste or to find out when Be Zero's next event is happening @bezerowastegirl

"People have to realize that we're planting seeds. You may not get to cultivate them right now, or maybe not even in this lifetime, but everything you do will have an impact as long as it's done with good intentions."

Jacob “Kobi” Azoulay

VP of Sustainability
Salisbury University

Interview
Ryan Daniher

Photos
Emily Kaufmann

Q: Tell me a little about yourself.

A: I'm a junior at Salisbury University studying journalism and political science with a minor in environmental studies. I serve on the Student Government Association as the Vice President of Sustainability. More importantly, I'm an activist. I take an active role in promoting the protection of our ecosystem, because pollution causes harm to all living beings, and I advocate for the less fortunate who may not have a say in such matters.

What are your experiences with environmental activism?

I got my first experience in environmental activism at a Power Shift conference in Philadelphia. I met and marched with activists from across the country, and that gave me hope that if enough people speak up, we can really make a difference with what goes on in this country.

A few months later, I went with a friend to a Dakota Access Pipeline protest in D.C., meeting Native Americans who had run 2,000 miles from North Dakota to speak out against the pipeline. With how often pipelines spill in America every year, I felt an obligation to speak up and support their fight against the pipeline.

Lately, I've committed my time to SGA sustainability work, planning events to raise awareness about environmentalism and working with students to make the campus more sustainable.

What are some of the efforts you're engaged in on campus?

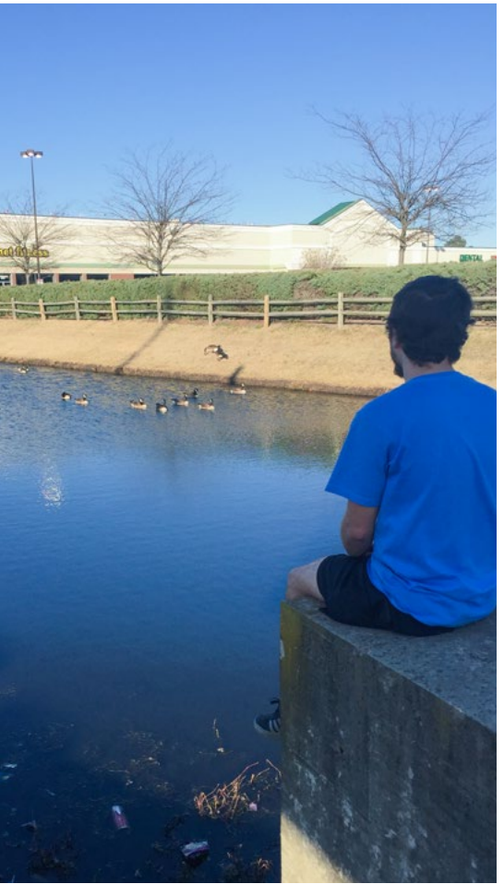
The SGA at Salisbury University is very involved with Earth Week, where students have opportunities across campus to participate in artistic efforts that will call attention to environmental issues. Students and the community will engage in educational activities, such as Pot Your Own Plant, an educational series to help students learn gardening techniques. As part of a group project in an environmental communication class, I submitted a Green Fund proposal to add LED lights, sunlight dimmers and occupancy sensors to the second and third hallways of the university's Henson Hall.

The Green Fund is a grant program designed to help students implement sustainable solutions on campus. By far, the most important effort I've been working on to combat climate change and pollution is to convince the Salisbury University Foundation to divest from fossil fuel investments by the year 2025. The university already has a plan to be carbon-neutral by 2050, showing that they understand the risk posed by fossil fuels, so I think it makes sense that their investments show a sense of urgency on the issue.

What are your current efforts to combat climate change and pollution in your local community?

My New Year's Eve resolution was to start giving back to the environment that gives life to me. About once a week, I go on walks

"It's hard not to be pessimistic sometimes with all of the recent assaults that we've been seeing on environmental protection, but I have hope."



picking up trash and recyclables around local neighborhoods, stormwater runoff ponds and rivers.

How does a trash-free Maryland affect the quality of living in the local community?

With less trash polluting ecosystems in Maryland, not only do you improve the health of the wildlife, you also restore the area to its natural beauty. We're a long way from having a trash-free Maryland, but with the help of citizens and local governments, I think we could one day get there if we committed ourselves to that goal.

How do you feel about the future of the environment?

It's hard not to be pessimistic sometimes with all of the recent assaults that we've been seeing on environmental protection, but I have hope. So many people are passionate about the environment, and I have faith that holding that position gives us the moral high ground.

Ryan Daniher is a Development Associate at Green Street Housing and serves on the Sustainability Advisory Committee for the City of Salisbury, Maryland.

Jacob Azolay serves on the Student Government Association at Salisbury University as the Vice President of Sustainability.

Photo
Maddy Loucas
@laddymoucas
Sunset Over the Gowanus Canal

Lauren Singer

Founder of
The Simply Co.

From making trash trashy to making laundry sexy, Lauren shares lessons about starting not one, but two zero waste businesses, one of which is set to open this summer in New York City.

Interview
Kyle Calian

Q: Describe your path to what you're doing now.

A: It all started at NYU where I majored in environmental studies and realized that even though I really cared about the environment and I was protesting about the environment and learning about the environment, I still wasn't doing enough. It took a big eye-opening experience with this girl who was using a lot of plastic and was also in my program. I realized that she had these values that she wanted to study, but she wasn't actually living them. Then, I realized that I was exactly the same way. It took that experience to really show me that caring about something deeply and actually living like you care about something deeply are two completely different things.

I had been protesting against the oil and gas industry – skipping school to go lobby in D.C., having protests and talking to everyone that I could about why everything was basically horrible in the world. At the same time, I was still using plastic every day. I was buying bad food. I was buying fast fashion. Even though I really cared about all these issues, I was actively subsidizing them with my everyday actions.

That's why I started out with eliminating plastic from my life, because plastic is one of the biggest products of the oil and gas industry, which is the industry that I was trying to fight. I started by just doing things like getting a reusable water filter and water bottle and trying to find products and clothes that weren't made from plastic. But I quickly found that it wasn't really possible to find most of the things I was using without plastic packaging. That was especially true for beauty products. If you walk into a CVS, it's basically impossible to find something that's not packaged in plastic. I had never really explored natural beauty or DIY before that. I started Googling and found a bunch of DIY recipes for beauty products.

Through that search process, I found Bea Johnson's blog Zero Waste Home. That's when I learned about the zero-waste lifestyle. It was the most empowering thing to ever happen to me. I didn't know that it was possible to do something so impactful in my own life. I thought the best way to live a sustainable lifestyle was to not use plastic. Realizing that there was so much more that I could be doing, and that I didn't have to make trash at all, was the most eye-opening, empowering, motivating thing. I just decided in that moment that I was gonna go zero-waste.

I didn't really talk about it, and I was still a senior in college. I would be in class using a mason jar and people would be like, "Why do you have a mason jar with coffee in it? What is that?" I would have to explain to them. My family started asking me about it, too. I realized that it was confusing for me to have to explain everything. I was doing it for myself and not for other people, so to explain my point of view in a way that wasn't abrasive or proselytizing was difficult at first. No one ever taught me how to just live my values.

How did Trash is for Tossers begin?

I started Trash is for Tossers because I wanted to create a safe place for anyone who was interested in what I was doing: to learn about it in a way that was very neutral and safe. When you talk about sustainability, it's really easy to get caught up in the politics.

I think a mistake that I made when I was in college was telling people, you have to live this way because you're messing up the environment. Nobody wants to be told what to do and nobody wants to be told that the way that they're living their life is wrong. We all make the choices that we make because we think they're right.

I learned through living this lifestyle that the best thing to do is just figure out what my values are, ask myself what makes me feel good and what has a good impact on the environment and actually just live that way. By living that way, being consistent and writing about what I was doing, I was having a much bigger impact than I would trying to convince people to live a certain way. They saw that I was feeling good and that I was healthy and that I was motivated. All of those things are exponentially more alluring than just trying to tell people what to do.

What inspired you to start Simply Co.?

When I graduated from college, I started working at the Department of Environmental Protection, as a sustainability manager in the engineering department, which is a job that I was completely not right for. I worked there for nine months. Every day I would say to myself, "I need to be doing something more creative. This isn't right for me, but this is the best job in environmentalism there is."

It was either working for a nonprofit or working for the government at that point. There really weren't any other options. I experienced that especially when I was in college and needed to get internships. There just were no creative things happening in sustainability. There were three big companies and two private. There was nonprofit and government. That's it.

People started emailing me saying, I really like these DIY products that you're making. At the time I was DIY-ing basically everything that I was using. They were like, clearly you have no friends and no family and no social life, because you have time to do all of this. I was like, well that's definitely not true, but how do I prove this? That's also why I started doing videos to show just how quick it was. People were also asking, "I really like these products, but I don't have time to make them myself. How can I buy something like this?"

I started researching the brands out there that were making somewhat sustainable products. In skin care, there really were a lot and are a lot of sustainable, amazingly made and packaged products. The same just isn't true for cleaning products.

When I looked into the cleaning product industry more in depth, I learned that there are over 85,000 industrial chemicals in use

in the United States. Most of them aren't tested for safety before being released into the market. Then, on top of that, in the U.S., cleaning product manufacturers aren't legally required to disclose ingredients on product packaging, so we have no idea what's actually in them.

That couldn't be more evident in the beauty industry. In the EU, they ban over a thousand chemicals for beauty products. In the U.S., I think the number right now is 11. Cleaning products are just as impactful in our everyday lives, if not more. We clean the surfaces that we eat off of with cleaning products. We clean the clothing that we wear all day and our sheets and our towels with laundry detergent. We are very intimate with these products that are potentially laden with toxic chemicals, and that's just not OK.

I started thinking about the cleaning products that I was making, and one of them was laundry detergent. I had been making a three-ingredient, organic vegan laundry detergent for two years at that point. I knew that it worked. It was effective. It was cost effective. It was really simple to make. I realized there was an opportunity for me to start making it myself. I was going to launch on Etsy at first and I was like no, I need to go bigger with this.

I was really unhappy at my job. At the same time I was like, OK let's see if I can find a way to make this work. I launched a video on Kickstarter and literally two days before I quit my job, booked a flight to Seattle. I was gonna do a road trip down the southern west coast of the United States. I was just like, "Fuck it. If this doesn't work, then it doesn't work. If it does, then I guess I have a company." I was really worried that I wouldn't make my goal of $10,000. It turned out that I made my goal in under 48 hours. By the end of the 30 days, I raised over $42,000 to start Simply, and now here we are. I have a company.

How long did it take to get Simply Co. started?

I still feel like I'm getting Simply Co. started. I had never started a business before when I started the Simply Co. When I launched my Kickstarter, I anticipated having the product in a box, but I didn't know the first thing about sourcing packaging at all. I ended up doing a jar because of the refillable aspect. It took me about a year between finishing the Kickstarter and actually getting product to the backers, because I just had to figure out how to make it all. I was expecting to maybe make 100 jars of it, or 100 boxes, and it would take me two weeks.

Then, I realized that I had over 800 pre-orders and that was over 2,000 boxes of detergent. I was living in Brooklyn in a tiny apartment, and I was hand-making all of this product. It was just insane. I would sit on my floor, covered in white powder, and cry. I don't know how someone didn't call the DEA on me.

Were you doing it alone?

I had my friends, my family. There were interns that I found. My mom. My poor mother came and hand-ground soap for me. I was baking the baking soda in Pyrex dish batches that could only fill about two jars of detergent. It was insane. In retrospect, it was really amazing, but also not how you should run a business.

I was really lucky. I was on a research trip in the Atlantic Gyre with Five Gyres and Jack Johnson and some other others like Céline Cousteau and her family. There was another company there that basically was like, "We love what you're doing. We help companies scale. Can we find you a manufacturer and a fulfillment center?" At that point, I was about ready to quit. I was like, I cannot hand-grind soap for one more second, or I will actually quit.

We partnered and they helped me find a manufacturer and a fulfillment center that aligned with my values and that uses sustainable materials and renewable energy. They helped me scale the company, so now it's a fully automated process. I have the jars and we offer bulk. Now, the next step is for me to offer boxes, so people can actually compost the entire package. It reduces shipping weight, breakage risk and ultimately helps me grow the business.

What steps did you take to get the business to be zero-waste?

With a simple product like mine, there are really only a few points of input. There's who I order the jars from, who I order the raw materials from, where I have it manufactured and how I have it brought to my fulfillment center. We use the same boxes from the glass jar manufacturer and have them printed and made in the same facility. They get shipped to our manufacturer who uses the same jars and the same boxes to fill everything. Those are sealed using paper tape in the same boxes and brought to our fulfillment center by truck, because it's so close. Then, they're shipped out in the same package. If they have to repackage it, it's with paper packaging and paper tape. Everything is completely recyclable and biodegradable. That being said, there are probably people who won't recycle it, but from my end everything that I do is as sustainable as possible.

We also offer bulk in large containers that we send to stores. They can use a return label that we provide and ship it back to us. We're also looking into an option that's fully biodegradable and not returnable, so we can actually decrease shipping emissions. It's another option that I'm weighing the impact of.

The biggest forms of trash that I find from consumer product companies are plastic, and that's inherently what I try to avoid at all costs for the Simply Co.

I think it's just working with your manufacturers to do things like have paper tape and paper packaging. Opening the Package Free Shop, 90 percent of the brands we're working with sent us all of their product with paper tape and paper packaging. What we're trying to do is show them what the other options are and provide a resource on our website where brands can go to get their paper filler and their paper tape. It's a really easy step that they can take. Another way is to partner with brands that will take back thin plastics. For Simply Co, it's actually really easy because we're buying raw ingredients that you could very simply get in bulk.

"I think the more mainstream zero waste becomes, the more open other businesses will be to integrating it into their own current practices."

What has been your biggest surprise so far?

I've been surprised by a lot of things. Not as much surprised as I am proud that I was able to start a company having no experience whatsoever. Starting a company that hasn't failed. I think, to me, that was never an option, but it's pretty crazy. Now, I've started my second company with 500-fold more ease, and it just shows me that really anyone could start a company if they have the right intentions. I think I really believe that business is the way to change the world. I'm surprised that there aren't more companies that are more sustainable, because it really is pretty easy to get your consumer product company to that place.

What are some trends you're seeing in the world of sustainability?

If I can help it, zero-waste will become more prevalent. But maybe not a trend — maybe more of, like, a longstanding practice. I'm hoping to make it more convenient for people to live a zero-waste and sustainable lifestyle through the Package Free Shop and through Simply Co., ... to just make those everyday choices a lot more intuitive and simple for people. Because right now, it's pretty hard to get everything you need in one place. It's sometimes really hard for people to find places that offer bulk products. I think the more mainstream zero waste becomes, the more open other businesses will be to integrating it into their own current practices. Then, it'll just be a snowball effect.

I also believe urban agriculture and sustainable energy in cities is something that will become more trendy. It's really hard right now to find solar solutions for small apartments. I really hope that changes. I would love to have an apartment that's run completely on solar power. I would love to have freedom from gas that's pre-wired. I would love to have a moment where I could just turn off the gas and use a solar powered burner in my apartment. Those are all things that I will work on after I open the store. I hope it becomes more trendy to do DIY-implemented sustainability on your own home. It just isn't convenient in New York City right now and that needs to change.

Who are some of your biggest influences?

My biggest influence is anyone who looks at the world, sees a problem and doesn't just talk about it, but actually decides to try to do something about it. To make it better, to change it or to solve it. People like you and people like Daniel Silverstein, who's my partner who takes discarded clothing scraps and uses them to make beautiful new clothing and textiles.

Even Bea, who saw the world of trash and didn't try to change the world. She just changed herself. But through changing herself, she's changing the world. It doesn't have to be a famous person, just anyone that doesn't believe the world has to be as it is. Those are the people that make me want to push through whatever is happening in my life and do the best that I can do.

What are some of your favorite companies outside of the Simply Co.?

Zero Waste Daniel. My favorite companies are the companies that I'll be having in Package Free Shop. They're really the companies that do exactly what I just said. They're the companies that saw problems in the world, or in the space that they're working in, weren't happy with the state of their category and started a business to solve it. We'll have a huge range of brands in Package Free Shop, from Zero Waste Daniel and Thinx to MeowMeowTweet and Lunette Cup. All of these companies are doing little things in their categories, but (if the brands take off) will have a large scale personal and environmental impact. I'm really excited about that.

“It's sometimes really hard for people to find places that offer bulk products. I think the more mainstream zero waste becomes, the more open other businesses will be to integrating it into their own current practices.”

In the same vein, what are some favorite things you always bring with you?

My Ecoffee cup. I used to use mason jars for coffee. I really like them because you can seal them and put them in your bag, but this cup I got as a gift from my friend Tom Griffiths who's a sustainable chef in the UK. I'm just obsessed with it. It wasn't possible to get them in the U.S. until I opened my store and placed a huge bulk order. They're made of bamboo, the base is totally biodegradable and the top is silicon. Silicon you can actually burn, and it turns into biodegradable ash, just like the Lunette cup. I love it, and I think it's chic and a lot sexier than a typical reusable cup.

I always have my reusable bag. I don't like purses, and I'll usually have a reusable bag in my reusable bag.

Like bagception.

Exactly, bagception, amazing. Then, it depends on what my day is, but I'll usually have reusable silverware and a reusable napkin. I keep a small stainless steel container full of baking soda in my bag all the time, which I use for deodorant or as toothpaste. I keep a Brush With Bamboo toothbrush in my drawer at work, so I can brush my teeth with that, or use it to not smell bad. With those, you can do whatever you need to do.

Finally, how can people get a jar of Simply Co.?

So many ways! You can buy Simply Co. at thesimplyco.com, but my first suggestion would be to find a local retailer and support them. You can do that by going to our website and looking at the store locator. My favorite are stores that offer the Simply Co. in bulk, so that you can bring your own container and fill it up. We will also be offering the Simply Co. online or through Package Free Shop.

Lauren Singer founded Trash is For Tossers with a mission to share simple zero waste tips. You can check out her website at trashisfortossers.com and follow her @trashisfortossers

She is also the founder of The Simply Co., a three ingredient non-toxic vegan organic laundry detergent company based in New York City. You can order a jar of The Simply Co. at thesimplyco.com and follow them on social media @thesimplyco

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Wicked Problem
noun

1. A social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

Social Equity: The Forgotten Precursor to Sustainability

Words
Ayla Alvarez

Photos
Brian Zablocki
@nowyourecool

It's easy to get caught up in the web of sustainability and forget about the three pillars that allow it to stand on its own: economic prosperity, environmental health and — the most commonly forgotten — social equity.

Frequently overlooked, and complicated to define, social equity is oftentimes the elephant in the room of sustainability discussions. The concept is that everyone in a community, not just the elite, ought to have full access to opportunities and participation, as well as equitable access to social services. Social equity is not based on treating all persons or communities the same.

Instead, it seeks to even the playing field and provide opportunities and benefits to those who lack access in the first place. Understanding the role that social equity plays is critical to supporting sustainability goals, simply due to the fact that sustainability initiatives wouldn't have much power without it. Major cities across the country are beginning to recognize the social and economic benefits associated with improving equitable access to services, and as we will see, have begun implementing various programs that begin to address equal access.

When communities lack access to opportunity (jobs, financial security, quality education, etc.), their propensity to act and think on issues beyond their basic needs is dramatically diminished. A lower-income family that struggles to send their children to school, while also juggling an hour-long commute to a low-paying job, will find it difficult to focus additional efforts on participating in sustainability initiatives, or engaging with local leaders to push for environmentally conscious changes within their communities.

These realizations shed light on the privilege that allows many within the sustainability movement to work, act and think beyond their basic necessities. Improving social equity is a valuable steppingstone in closing the inequality gap, so communities can grasp onto financial and social stability and begin to engage with issues and concerns beyond their baseline. This is important, because inclusive citizen engagement plays a significant role in improving the scope and reach of public projects, improving relationships between the public and local government, and increasing the overall quality of life for community residents. Sustainable communities only flourish when systems of the haves and have-nots are abolished.

Many cities and public agencies have begun taking steps toward improving equity by working to provide a wider range of choices for residents who have few, if any, choices to begin with. These improvements range in scale and include generating policies that require developers to build mixed-income

housing, improve access to various modes of transit or provide relief programs for qualifying low-income populations.

In no way is this a perfect system of provisions just yet, but it is important to recognize the value that some agencies are pushing forward to help improve the social and economic vitality of neighborhoods around the country. In New York City, agencies such as the NYC Department of Transportation are gearing up with their Mobility Management programs to help address issues of inaccessibility, not just for low income groups, but also for non-english speakers and those with mental and physical disabilities.

Details of city landscape that one may glaze over, such as street furniture, tactile surfaces and guideway developments, act as important pieces in creating safe and equitable environments for disabled populations. Developments to improve access to public transportation, such as Safe Routes to Transit (NYC DOT) and reduced fare programs for low-income citizens (MTA), are the baby steps we see city agencies carrying out in order to start picking away at the deeply entrenched issues that create social inequity.

Without a strong commitment to improving social equity, local governments will continue to see their sustainability initiatives fall short, as their social foundations erode under systems of inequality and social exclusion. Such is the case with 'wicked problems' such as these. Solutions can only be found through collaboration amongst the public and the various public agencies and departments that shape our urban landscapes. As constituents, environmental warriors, social justice fighters and everyone in between, we the people have a continuous duty to show up and to bring social equity to the forefront of the sustainability movement.

Ayla Alvarez is an urban planner, thinker and environmentalist based in New York City. She works as an Assistant Transportation Planner at SIMCO Engineering, P.C.

Laura Rosenshine

Founder of
Common Ground Compost

From one advertising agency to the next, Laura got frustrated with not feeling like she was doing enough. After an eye-opening volunteer experience abroad, she decided to come back to New York and apply what she learned by starting up a compost collection business in the East Village.

Interview and Photos
Kyle Calian

Q: Describe your path to what you are doing now. How did you end up here?

A: Short version is that I was working in advertising but was not doing things I felt were good. I was interested in sustainability but had nothing to show for it on my resume, so I transitioned to a green advertising agency. I liked the clients a lot better, but it still didn't feel like enough of an impact. So, I said, "Screw it. I'm going to go and get something on my resume." I went and did a sustainability volunteer program in New Zealand. I learned what composting was and that was eye-opening.

I came back to New York, and I was like, OK. I don't know what I want to do with my life, but I know that I can't throw food in the garbage anymore. I connected with the Lower East Side Ecology Center and had just missed their master composting class for the year. But I kind of befriended one of the people, and she let me tag along to a shortened version of the class that she was giving to the Parks Department.

And from there?

My brother worked at a private school and I was like, "Would your school want to compost?" He said, "Yeah, Chef's all about it." And that's when I started learning the difference between residential waste and commercial waste. It turned out their existing hauler had a compost program, so they started right away. I befriended the sales agent who was working freelance for this hauler, and we started this project where we filmed the compost truck and site, so he could use it as a tool to teach people about composting.

I kind of learned about the commercial side from him. Over the next year or so, I realized the city was starting to support the Ecology Center and all of these great nonprofits that are doing stuff on the residential compost side, but no one was doing it on the commercial side. I started [helping] more schools pro bono. Simultaneously, I was working for a company that had an in-vessel, on-site food waste system.

So, was it in New Zealand that you started to work on sustainability, or did you have an interest in it before?

I was interested in sustainability before, but there were so many avenues of sustainability. I didn't know which to go down. I just kind of fell into it when I came back, which seems to happen organically to a lot of people. They're interested in it early on, and then they have to navigate a variety of paths through complicated woods to figure out where they wind up.

Have you always felt a responsibility to contribute to something bigger?

No, and I never wanted to own my own business.

And now you're a business owner. So, why does composting matter?

In today's world, we have a problem with landfills. They've been on the decline over

the last century, and they're harder and harder to site. They're more expensive to run, their regulations are increasing and no one wants them in their backyard. So, the more we can do to recycle, to divert things from landfills, the better. What people don't realize is that there are many more products in our world than the ones we're used to — glass, metal, plastic and paper — that can be recycled. And food scraps are one of those new things.

Composting is organic decomposition in a controlled environment — you're helping the process happen. Certain materials, when they end up in a landfill, have different levels of harm on our environment. People don't really think about what happens to food when it goes into a landfill, but what happens is it gets suffocated. It gets plowed on, it gets compressed, it gets covered. But it still decomposes. And when it decomposes, it creates methane gas that is bad for our environment. Much worse than carbon dioxide.

How much worse?

About 27 times worse than carbon dioxide. And that doesn't have to happen. If we don't put food waste in that suffocated environment, we won't generate methane in the first place. If we can remove food scraps from the garbage — from the landfill

— and put them in a controlled environment to decompose, there can be beneficial reuse. Traditional composting converts food scraps to a usable soil amendment (fertilizer) that returns nutrients to the ground. Another option is to digest food scraps in an anaerobic (without air) digester. This process intentionally generates methane in a controlled way, and in some cases through this process, methane can have beneficial reuse by turning back into energy. Recycling food waste is important, because it's preventing the uncontrolled release of methane gas into the atmosphere.

And where does Common Ground get their compost?

That's a great question. Common Ground is mostly a consulting company. We work with businesses, offices and buildings, to help them understand their options. Most of the time we're linking the business with a compost program. So, a restaurant will separate its food scraps, put them out on the curb and a separate truck will come by to collect those food scraps. Haulers have their own relationships with compost sites, which can get complicated, but we do vetting for them. We say, "This is what's going to happen to your compost."

In general, we are educating and putting a program in place, so we don't really get compost. It's possible in the future that we'll increase our relationships with haulers and be able to bring back some of that compost. In some cases the haulers are already doing that on their own.

How does the bike program fit into all of this?

When I was working for a commercial waste hauler, I realized that a lot of the agents are motivated by commission. They're not really interested in small businesses and their garbage, even though small businesses are sometimes more conscious about their garbage. A lot of businesses in the East Village especially have an eye out for sustainability.

We decided to run a pilot where we collect compost using a bike and trailer, and partner with a garden to process it locally. The idea here is that these are resources. If we could do it on a small scale to keep those resources in our community, that would be great. It's not feasible for us to work with large restaurants, because they'll generate hundreds of pounds of compost a night — we just don't have the type of space to process that. So, we focus on small business. We have a partnership with East Side Community School, and we bring food scraps back here three days a week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We've got a couple that work for us, and they process the compost using the Bokashi method, which is a fermentation method of composting.

What do you do with the compost?

Most of the time we're just trenching the compost into the ground and bringing nutrients back to the existing soil. This year, we're starting to do more controlled cases above ground, so we can monitor inputs and hopefully produce compost that

we can sell. Ideally, we'd be selling it in the locations where we collect the compost from in the first place.

So, is this community garden that you work out of owned by the city?

This particular lot is complicated. It's actually the Department of Education's property, and they have a joint maintenance agreement with the Parks Department. We have a casual MOU with the school. They allow us to store our bike and trailer here and to run our compost program if we do some compost education with the 11th graders and make this place more functional by involving community members, because there weren't any teachers that had the time to manage this space.

When I was going through the master composting class, this is where I did my volunteer work with the organization Earth Matter. Earth Matter went back to Governor's Island where they do a lot of composting, so no one was here. I had the idea for a bike program and said, "I need a place to store a bike, and we need a place to compost. Let's do it here."

How do you get paid?

The clients pay us. We offer 3.5-, 4- or 5-gallon buckets. Generally, the 3.5 is just for residential use, because we do both residential and commercial pickups. Then, we have a 4-gallon bucket for $5 and a 5-gallon bucket for $6.

I pay my haulers that do the work, and we make financial contributions to the garden. For example, they just put in these grow lights and said, "OK, we need to lock the doors now, because we have a heating system in here." Instead of going through the hassle of trying to get the school to pay for it, I'm just going to do it, because it's a give back for us. We also paid for all this lumber for the raised gardening beds. I would say at this point I've given more money than I've made.

So is this your full-time gig?

Common Ground I spend like 95 percent of my time on, and the bike program is much smaller. It's not a nonprofit yet. We are looking into that in the near future. The garden is registered with Green Thumb. If it ends up making sense to be a nonprofit, we would do it (or we would probably get a fiscal sponsor). I always envisioned the program going that direction, but I wasn't going to jump through all the hoops, because the program is so small. I wasn't going to go create a nonprofit if I didn't know that the concept could work here, which we still don't know 100 percent.

Residential compost is going to be sanitation run soon. Is that going to make things even trickier?

Yeah. The rule with waste is that the second it hits the curb it becomes city property. So, we get it before it hits the curb. We would love to see the city, and they do, support a combination of community composting and the curbside pilot. They haven't really figured out how they're going to encourage people to drop off food scraps when they can just bring them to their basement. But for the purposes of our program, we believe that in the long run taking commercial waste will be our direction.

Do haulers seem enthusiastic about composting?

Some do, some don't. I can't speak for them 100 percent. What frustrates me is when they don't tell people about the compost program, unless the client specifically asks. And sometimes they discourage [the client]. They'll say, "It's more expensive. You don't want to do it." Well, it shouldn't be more expensive. I think it fluctuates a lot. But it's a new thing that they're still figuring out. Some haulers are definitely pushing their compost programs, some even more because of the legislation. But there are a lot of challenges around it.

Take me through an average day at Common Ground.

Sure. An average day will be a good amount of time on my computer responding to emails. Maybe putting together some quotes of proposals for clients. Maybe designing signage, because we do signage and education. Running around a lot. It's most beneficial when we see our clients and can make recommendations, so we're in their space a lot.

Meredith, who works with me, is executing a lot of our work. And I do a little bit of

the first stages with new clients. I'm on the phone all the time just answering very basic questions about what composting in New York City looks like — taking potential clients through the concept. It's very foreign to people. It's only more tricky than recycling because it's so unfamiliar. Recycling is bad in New York, so we always help our clients with that too.

You just have to explain to them what you need. Most people think, "We can't compost here. We don't have the space for that." It's like no, no, no — we're just separating it and sending it out. Just getting them to understand what urban composting looks like for a business is what I spend a lot of my day doing.

And then you're here working on this garden sometimes?

Yeah. I don't work in the reclaimed organics program much anymore. The first two years I definitely did. The first year I was on the bike. When I'm in the garden now, I'm usually just here as a community volunteer.

We have two haulers, and then there's Max. Max used to be a hauler. He's very involved in community gardening, and I pretty much just pay him right now to manage the garden. I think it's a strange situation that the city has created. Right now most community composting is equated with volunteer work. And I don't have a problem with that, but I don't think it's sustainable. If you really want to have a medium-sized, successful composting program that diverts a good amount of organics, people should be paid for their time. It's a job. Our model isn't perfect, right? And so, we're just trying to prove that it's doable.

How can people drop off their compost with you?

If you want to be a community garden that is part of the NYC Compost Project ecosystem, you have to offer a free compost drop-off. So, that's our yellow box out front. For people that want it picked up, we charge them $30 every two months for our residential collection program, and the commercial program is based on a fee-per-bucket structure. Right now, we collect from all of our businesses. But presuming we have a business that is willing to walk it over, we would create a different pricing structure for them. And if they wanted to move their own compost over here, we would totally support that. Fine by us.

Outside of dropping off compost, how can someone get involved?

I think the best thing to do is go on Green Thumb's website and find a local community garden. If anyone wants to work directly with us, they're welcome to drop us a line or an email or whatever. And you know, they're more than welcome to volunteer.

One of the challenges is that we usually trench during the day, so people with full-time jobs can't generally do that. But as part of our effort to make this into a community garden, we will be having more structured open hours where people can come compost with us or just do stuff in the garden. We're

working on lists of things that need to be improved, and we'll be hosting composting workshops. Being a Green Thumb Garden, you have to host (I think) one educational thing a season. Ideally, we'll do more than that. But yeah. They can come learn how to do the Bokashi method with us anytime.

Cool. What are some trends you're seeing in the world of sustainability?

A lot of bike programs. My colleague is just on her way back right now from the U.S. Composting Council Annual Conference. The past two years they have held a community composting forum, and a lot of bike composters come. I'm assuming she's going to come back tomorrow just, like, mind blown with all the things that we can do to make our program better. I want to get these guys an electric bike. I want to build better bins. We want to improve our composting by using air (blowing air into the piles, which will speed up the processing). I want to be monitoring our temperatures better.

I think that New York has a lot more regulation than other cities, especially around waste hauling. Starting programs like this in other cities is easier. Technically, what we do falls in a gray area. But I communicated with the city agencies about what I'm doing. They have not stopped us. I think it's because we are so small.

The challenge is that people don't know what compost is, so you have to really provide the education. You can't just show up and say, give me your food scraps. You need to understand what those businesses are paying to get rid of those scraps and make that work in your model. Other cities have a harder time, because they aren't as dense as New York.

Who are some of your biggest influences?

Hmmm. Great question. I was incredibly inspired by Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring," which is an older book. You know, when I started getting into this, when I was really happy that I got into it from the commercial side and the community composting side, it's really the community composters that were the inspiration. There isn't this aura of competitiveness. The aura is information sharing, and growing together and knowing that we're supporting each other.

It's very time intensive to know what everyone is doing, but I think the network is there if you want to tap into it. And when I sit down and talk to people doing composting, it just inspires me. So, you know, we kind of vibe off of each other. That's certainly a different landscape than advertising. It's really nice to be working and to know that you have support from most people.

Is there anything personal that you do to reduce your impact?

I'm pretty conscious. My newest thing is preemptively saying no thank you for a straw. That is pretty hard to remember. I'm definitely bringing my own containers now when I go to a restaurant — a to-go container. It's not always easy to remember, so I'm working on that too.

What else do I do? I do the obvious things. You know, turn my lights off. Don't take long showers. I'm a selective vegetarian, so I don't eat very much meat. If I do eat meat, I like to know where it's coming from. I eat organically but not all the time. I do think supporting that type of thing with your consumer dollars is important. I like to say that composting is a really great thing to do for the environment, because you generate food waste everyday whether you like it or not. But that's one thing you can do everyday, and sometimes multiple times a day, that is green. So, that's great.

And what is your favorite thing to bring everywhere you go?

I always have a water bottle with me. It's important to stay hydrated. I think it's been, like, six years or something since I've bought a water bottle. I always have my phone on me. Oh, and I started actually bringing ... they make these silicon reusable bags now. I started carrying that with me to make it easier to collect compost while I'm running around, because the bag won't leak. And I can reuse it.

I just started doing that. Before that I would just tuck [food scraps] in something and get something grimy in my bag. I haven't yet pulled banana peels out of garbage bins on the corner but could see myself doing that relatively soon.

What's your home compost bin choice?

Great question. I do two methods of composting in my home. I have a courtyard in my apartment, so I have a garden gourmet compost bin that I do my fruits, vegetables and non-greasy, non-meaty things. And then I also have a Bokashi bucket for my greasy, post-consumer stuff. And I'm just starting. My sister just moved in with me, and she has three cats, so we're just about to start experimenting with bokashi-ing the cat litter. And the cat poop. I heard it's successful, so we're going to give it a whirl.

Laura Rosenshine is the founder of Common Ground Compost, a local compost pickup service in New York City. Her organization facilitates the recycling of organics, supporting the health and sustaining the growth of urban communities.

Follow along on Instagram @commoncompost or Facebook at Common Ground Compost.

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Indigenous
adjective:

1. Having originated in and being produced, growing, living or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment.

In Harmony with the Tiger

Words and Photo
Nikhil Mahen

Summer 2016 reintroduced the world to the tale of a tree-swinging kid brought up by wolves and hunted by a tiger. Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book" captivated readers, and the latest movie adaptation of his stories delivered. But there is another story set in that same jungle — Kanha National Park — that also deserves our attention. This is the story of a small, semi-nomadic tribe, called Baiga.

The Baiga people have inhabited the jungle since time immemorial. They set up camp in different parts of the forest and live off of the land, practicing swidden (or shifting agriculture) to ensure the land regenerates. The Baiga personify sustainable living by taking only what they need and living a life in near-perfect balance with their surroundings.

But, as with every good story, our protagonists were presented with challenging circumstances. In 1968, the Baiga people were asked to relocate from the central parts of Kanha National Park toward the fringes of the forest. This first request was just the beginning, as relocation requests continued to happen sporadically over time. But there was one very important detail that officials overlooked: by asking the Baiga people to move, they indirectly affected our beloved storybook antagonist, Sher Khan — the bengal tiger.

Kanha National Park is one of the premier tiger reserves in India. Madhya Pradesh, the state that houses Kanha, today hosts the third-largest tiger population in the country. The Baiga people revere and worship these magnificent creatures that share their home. Even if a tiger kills a member of the Baiga tribe, the elders spare the living animal and instead conduct a ceremony exacting revenge on a metaphorical tiger.

In India, the push for the conservation of tigers has increased dramatically over the last few decades. Forest officials in Kanha took on the responsibility of bolstering the tiger population, which required a comprehensive survey of the land. To maximize their efforts, they turned to the tiger experts — the Baiga people.

The Baiga understand how to track a tiger, recognizing signs like the chirping of the birds or the rustling of the leaves. They helped officials track tigers in the Kanha forests, keeping a population count and even identifying tigers in need of medical attention. The tribe was also indispensable in the effort to identify poachers looking for a new fur rug. They were invaluable to the forest officials, and the tiger population in Kanha soared by 50 striped beasts in less than a decade. Today, Madhya Pradesh is home to more than 300 tigers, many of which inhabit Kanha National Park.

But for the Baiga people, the tides were destined to turn. In 2014, in an effort to further expand the tigers' habitat, the tribe was again asked to move. And so, they packed up their homes at the edge of the forest and settled in nearby villages.

Many of the tribespeople worked as menial laborers on fields just to survive, and others moved away. The forest — once their source of food, fire and shelter — was now suddenly off limits.

While the Baiga people lived in the forest and aided officials, there were no reports of tiger poaching, but much has changed in their absence. In 2016 alone 23 tigers were killed by poachers, according to a Hindustan Times report.

So, I leave the judgment to the reader. Perhaps the best way to protect these magnificent beasts is to let the real experts continue to live alongside them.

Nikhil Mahen *is currently a manager at Lowe's Innovation Labs (Bangalore office). He has a Master's from Duke University and is interested in working on technologies that make the world more sustainable.*

Marina McCoy

Founder of
Waste-Free Earth

After switching from graphic design to sustainability in college, Marina decided to dive head-first into the world of sustainability coordination and direction for music festivals.

Interview
Kyle Calian

Photos
Jena Anne

Illustrations
Hannah Salyer

Q: Tell me about yourself and how you got around to starting Waste-Free Earth.

A: When I moved out to Tahoe to go to school, I was a graphic arts designer. During my first environmental class, I realized that was the field I wanted to work in, so I switched my major. I did a ton of sustainability internships to figure out if I wanted to work in the nonprofit or for-profit sector. I thought I wanted to be a sustainability director for a ski resort, but during my internship with an organization called Protect Our Winters I stumbled upon these guys, Jack and Danny. They were part of our Rider's Alliance, but they also produced this festival called the Frendly Gathering back in my home state of Vermont. I asked if they needed help with sustainability at their festival. They said yes, and everything just clicked. After that festival, I began to grow my career as a sustainability director for music festivals.

I've always been super passionate about live music. It's been the one constant in my life. When I'm in a funk, I go see live music, and I know everything is going to be alright. So, it makes sense that I ended up working in the music industry. We have these big events (music festivals) being produced across the globe, but the way we produce them and the waste that comes from them needs to be reevaluated. There are over a thousand music festivals happening in the U.S. every year and at least a couple thousand people going to each event. Without a doubt, these events create community. But we can also create environmental change within those communities and incorporate that into our everyday lives. That's how Waste-Free Earth came about. I've always wanted to spearhead environmental change, and because there are thousands of people at these events, it gives you a ton of leverage to create a bigger impact together.

It's such a ripe opportunity to teach people good habits that they can practice within a community space and then bring back home.

Exactly. When they see how easy the changes can be at a festival, they can bring it home and integrate it into their everyday life. It's pretty cool.

So, when did you start Waste-Free Earth?

I used to have a business partner, but we didn't see eye to eye on some things, which is totally fine. Because I ended things, I thought it would be best to change the company name and start fresh. Long story short, the concept has been around for over three years now.

Can you tell me a little more about what Waste-Free Earth does?

We're a full-service sustainability company that works within the festival industry. When I first started working for festivals, I saw this big disconnect between production and waste-management. At Waste-Free Earth, we work with event producers, artists and vendors on sustainability issues. From compostable products and food drives to nonprofit partners, carbon-offset credits

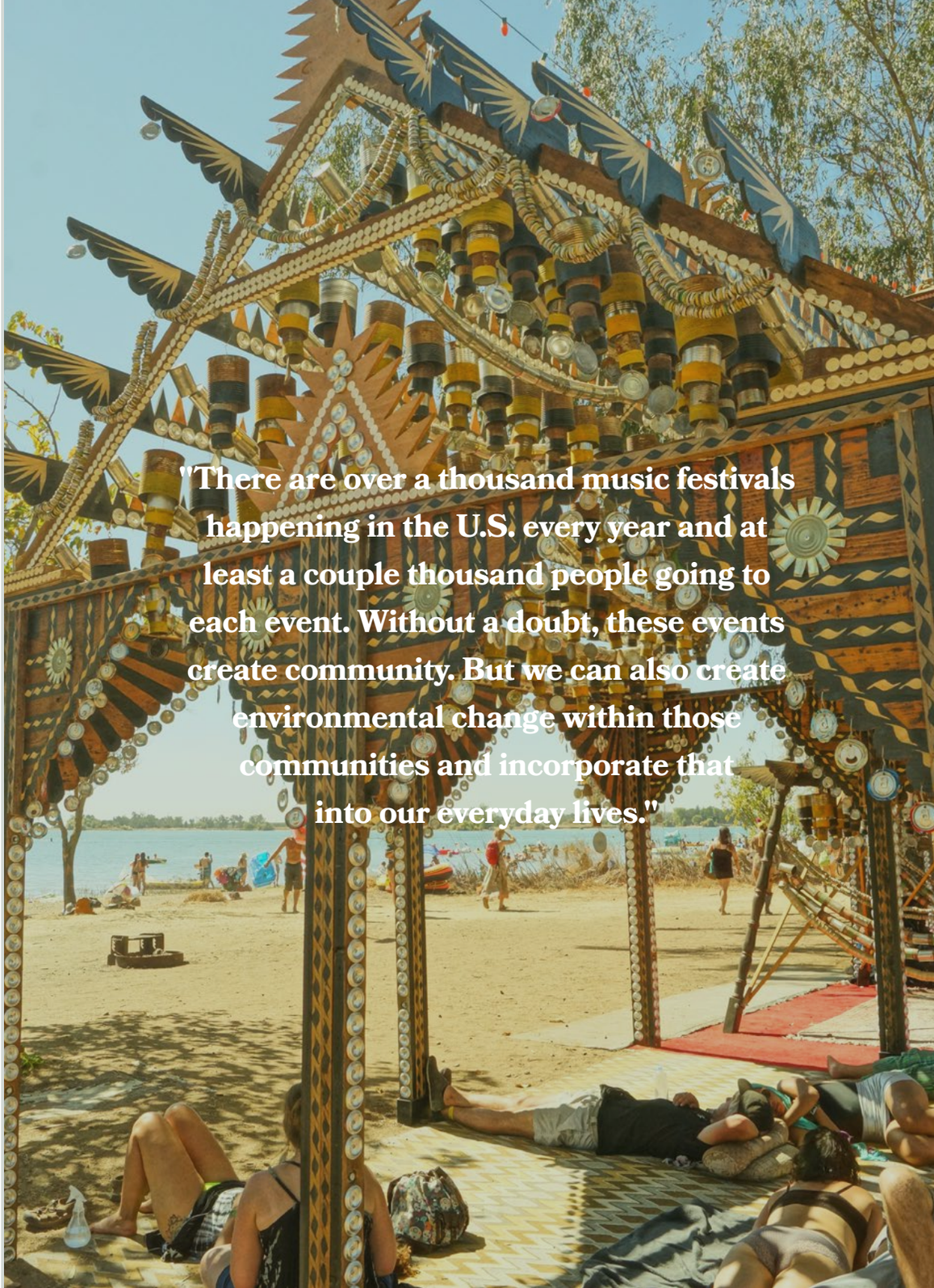


Photo
John Ryan
@showlovemedia

and sustainable workshops, we make sure sustainability is incorporated into every aspect of the event. In a dream world, we would eliminate waste altogether. But as I have come to find out, there are a lot of laws and regulations that stand in the way of making it happen quickly. We are working on it.

We try to encourage and convince people that going waste-free takes time. It's hard to cut waste cold turkey, but it's easier if you take it one-step at a time. Every month, aim to eliminate one piece of waste from your everyday life. First, it's the single-use plastic bottles. Next, it is plastic containers, then wrappers. A lot of people get discouraged if they can't be waste-free right off the bat, so I just say to slowly integrate the waste-free lifestyle and lead by example.

We also leverage artists to inspire environmental change — getting them to use reusable water bottles on stage, compost and take waste-free workshops. They have so much influence at events, not only on stage but offstage as well. If they request no single-use plastic water bottles in their riders, that makes a huge difference. It might annoy some people, but the venue is able to build a stronger brand by being a leader in sustainability. You definitely have to be strict, because if we keep having events like we do now, we're all going to be rolling around in trash.

It sounds like the production approach you take really gets to the root of the problem, and the artist approach is just as powerful. It reminds me of Jack Johnson's rider — have you seen it?

Yeah, I have! It's pretty cool — no single-use plastic water bottles or cups, recycling has to be separated, the venue has to purchase carbon-offset credits, among many other things. I would love it if more artists demanded environmental actions. Producers will listen, because they want the artist(s) to play their venues. Artists have a lot of power, and it would be great if they could use it for good.

So, what festivals have you worked with so far?

I've worked Frendly Gathering, WinterWonderGrass, Camp Out for the Cause, GuitarFish, Snowglobe and The Lost Sierra Hoedown. Now that I'm done with school, I hope to add more to that list. I would love to work Pickathon, Summer Camp, NorthWest String Summit, The Festy Experience ... any that align with my core message and beliefs about sustainability.

What does your ideal festival look like?

My ideal festival is like Pickathon up in Oregon. They were the first to go completely reusable. They have wash stations throughout the event, and you can either bring your own reusable containers or you can put a $15 deposit down for the weekend to use their plates, silverware and containers, which all the vendors accept.

Compostable products are great, but they're extremely difficult to break down, even in an industrial sized compost facility. With Pickathon, they got rid of everything compostable (except, of course, food

waste). It shows people how easy it is to use reusables and still have fun. So, that's pretty ideal. They also use solar energy. They've really minimized their waste enormously. They only go through one dumpster during the whole event with 3,500 people in attendance. It's pretty incredible.

That's amazing.

They were the first to get this intense about it, and they got a lot of heat at first. Some people were a little uncomfortable, but they got used to it. Instead of deterring people from the event, it actually made it more popular. My main goal going forward is to get Frendly Gathering and WinterWonderGrass to adopt this model in 2018.

Do you have any insights to share about working on sustainability issues?

I have mainly indulged myself in the waste sector of sustainability, because that's where I believe most of our problems stem from. Composting and recycling efforts are great, and everyone should be doing them, but that's not what is going to save us. Reducing waste on all spectrums is. It's great to compost at your house, but if we didn't buy so much food where we ended up neeeding to compost most of it, that would be ideal. If we start buying in bulk instead of buying all packaged products, it would cut down our waste and energy outputs. People forget how much energy goes into making extra food, producing packaging and then having to recycle, compost or trash the items.

Overconsumption is a huge issue, which leads to even more waste. We really don't need that much to live — living in a van has taught me that. I used to have everything: a mountain bike, climbing gear, road bike, skis and snowboard, but I realized that I honestly just bike around town and hike. So, I sold the rest of my gear. If I want to go mountain biking, I rent a bike. It's not my passion, so there is no need for it to take up space. I now try to look at how versatile everything I buy is. That way, instead of having four items that do four different things, I now have one item that does all four.

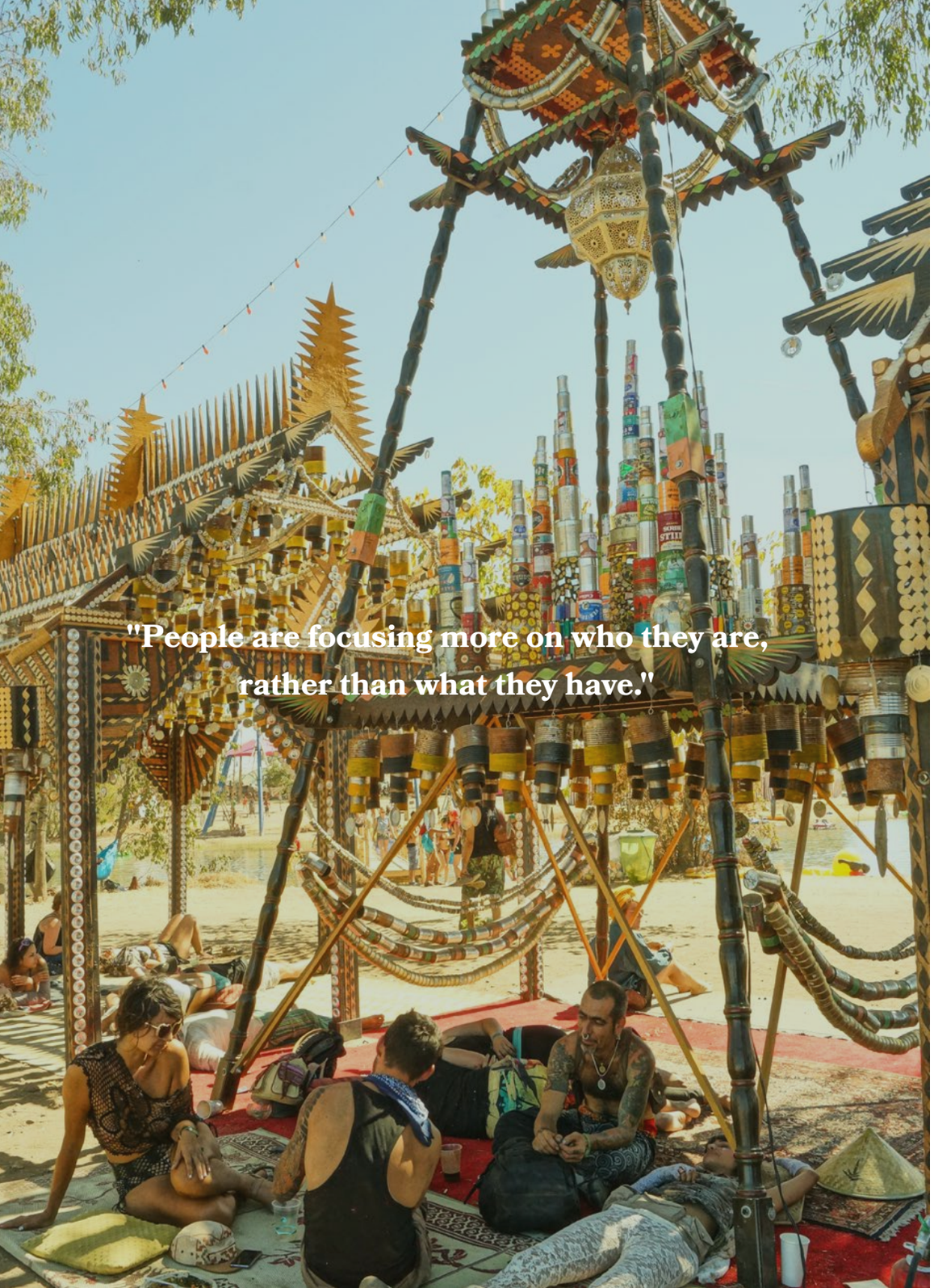
In regard to festivals, some have new themes year after year, which means their art installments get trashed. Coming from a waste perspective, that's ridiculous. However, now people are using more versatile art pieces that can be rearranged or assembled differently for the next year.

What are some trends you're seeing in sustainability?

There is way more desire to live a more simplistic lifestyle. People are interested in living in tiny homes or in a van, reducing their everyday waste or just wanting to reduce the amount of stuff they have. They're taking a step back and realizing they don't need big houses or fancy cars. People are focusing more on who they are, rather than what they have. I think that's really powerful and is having a bigger impact than people realize.

I've also noticed that people doing this have found it's gotten more difficult because of the government. More laws and regulations are coming into place, so you can't call your van

Photo
Madonna Dunbar



or tiny house your home, which is absolutely ridiculous to me. Why must I have to pay high rent or a high mortgage to live? I know that there are some bad apples out there who abuse the system, but for me, having a smaller living area lets me pay back all my student loans faster, keep my debt down, pay attention to my physical and mental health, and most importantly, work a job that I truly care about. People can say all they want about how bad our generation is, but I have a lot of hope for this generation.

I do too. How do you envision Waste-Free Earth growing as a company?

I see Waste-Free Earth becoming a full-service sustainability company, where people can come and get information on many different subjects. I want to stick with the festivals I'm working with now and continue to do more around the country. But, I also want to expand my sustainability horizons by working on different side projects. I'm working on one side project with this ski group based out of Sweden called The Bunch. We're producing five-minute videos that will be up for a month, with the goal of getting 100,000 views. With every view we get, one tree will be planted in Indonesia through Ecosia, the search engine that plants trees every time you search. Our goal is to be able to plant more than one million trees over the next couple of years. We're hoping that if we keep up these short films we can continue to grow that model.

How do you continue to push yourself and the business forward?

I push myself through researching the latest trends and comparing my efforts to others. This is such a new career and more people are starting to get interested in sustainability coordination, especially with music festivals, because so many people are passionate about attending them. That means more competition for me, which forces me to stay proactive, when it comes to sustainability. What I love about the work I do is that there's always more work to be done. I love seeing our impact in numbers and trying to beat them year after year. Also, seeing people's positive reactions brings me a lot of satisfaction.

What are some of the best outcomes you've had from doing this work?

Some of my best outcomes have been at The Frendly Gathering and WinterWonderGrass. They were the first two festivals that I ever worked for, and they both gave me a lot of room to essentially experiment and do whatever I wanted in the sustainability sector. We have really nailed the zero-waste aspect (of course, we are always trying to get better). It now leaves us room to start adding more social aspects to sustainability, like hosting a food drive and working with food rescuing programs, like Imperfect Produce, to get fresh fruits and vegetables for the event that would have otherwise been thrown into a landfill.

Seeing the vendors shift their mentality about how waste can be managed at events is also very humbling — as well as attendees voicing their opinions when they feel disappointed with how the waste

was managed or how our initiatives were executed. It's a good sign knowing other people care just as much as you do.

We just did a big sustainability launch on Snowglobe's social media outlets this year and got so much positive feedback. People do care about the efforts you are striving toward, if you let them know you're committed. Some festivals don't want to advertise their sustainability initiatives, but it's important to make a statement to attendees before they get to the festival. That way, they start to think about doing their part at the event before they actually get there. It's not about bragging. It's about being transparent, so the patrons know what to expect.

"Seeing the vendors shift their mentality about how waste can be managed at events is also very humbling — along with attendees voicing their opinions when they are disappointed with how the waste was managed or how our initiatives were executed. It's a good sign knowing other people care just as much as you do."

Have you ever felt like your efforts really helped shift a person's worldview?

At my second year working The Frendly Gathering, one of my volunteers learned that a lot of the items that we picked up throughout the event weren't actually recyclable. We talked about how every time you recycle plastic, it loses quality, requires a lot of energy to breakdown and that the whole process of producing plastic is environmentally detrimental. The next year she came back and was buying in bulk, which made me really happy and amazed at how grateful and excited she was about it. That was the first time this happened, but it has happened quite a few times since.

Another time was when I was working for Protect Our Winters at a tradeshow in Denver, Colorado. This girl came up to me telling me that climate change is a big hoax. I calmly explained that you may not be able to see the effects of climate change right in front of you, but if you look at what we're doing to our visible environment with plastics, ocean acidification and pollution, it's a lot clearer to see that we shouldn't be taking these sort of actions. Her face kind of shifted, and she had a big, "a-ha" moment where she said, "I've never really thought of it like that."

It's a lot easier to convince someone that the plastic products the birds are ingesting are killing them than to convince them that greenhouse gases are bad for the environment. Almost everyone can agree that rabbits eating plastic and cigarette butts is not cool.

What is your favorite zero-waste gear?

I would definitely say my hydro-flask — I drop it all over the place and it never dents, which is super rad. Many of my friends have them now, too. I love how they keep the water so cold for so long. Next, is my Light My Fire container, which is a triangle set that has a bunch of reusable stuff in it. I bring it with me virtually everywhere.

Since the portion sizes are so big in the U.S., it's hard for me to finish my meals when I go out to eat. It's nice to be able to package up my leftovers in a reusable container. It is made of plastic, which I try to stay away from, but it is really durable. I've been using it for two years, and it's also lightweight.

I have some glass Tupperware that I use in the van, but it's heavy, so I don't bring it out with me as much. I have a stainless steel reusable straw that I bring with me when I go out, especially when I go to bars. I also have my thick glass straw for smoothies. Oh, and I bring my stainless steel Klean Kanteen pint cup with me whenever I go out. If they aren't serving in reusables at the bar, I have them pour it in my cup. Sometimes they won't let me do that, so I just end up not drinking. No biggie.

Marina McCoy founded Waste-Free Earth after she realized the adverse effects her actions were having on the environment. Through relatable advice and actions, Marina hopes to inspire everyone to make a positive difference in their daily lives, no matter how big or small it ma y be.

Waste-Free Earth is a full-service sustainability company, focusing on sustainability direction for music festivals and providing sustainability consulting for bands that want to 'green up' their tours.

Find them on Facebook at Waste-Free Earth.

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A huge thank you to the following incredible businesses for backing The Regeneration with confidence and for making this entire project possible.

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A heartfelt thank you to the following awesome people and businesses whose generosity empowered us to print our first issue.

Strange Society Productions

Westchester Smile Design

AnestasiA Vodka

Jon Gaynes

Trevor Taylor

Meg Bassett

Avery Feldman and Doug Sifert

Patrons

Finally, thank you to the following amazing friends whose contributions helped push this project over the finish line.

Stephanie Vanden Bos
Michael Landau
James Sutton
Ahmad Bouholaigah
Hannah Rubin
Manolo Ampudia
Bruce Bassett
Farah Ashraf
Zach Narva
Greg Haroutounian
Ano Haroutounian-Weiner
Lucy de Kooning Villeneuve
Alyssa Bassett
Davis Burroughs
Katin Shalit
Aruna Naimji
Zach Policella
Colin Roy

An excerpt from Walden.

Reading

Written by
Henry David Thoreau

Illustration
Hannah Salyer

Photo
Chelsea Greene

We boast that we belong to the nineteenth century and are making the most rapid strides of any nation. But consider how little this village does for its own culture. I do not wish to flatter my townsmen, nor to be flattered by them, for that will not advance either of us. We need to be provoked,—goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot. We have a comparatively decent system of common schools, schools for infants only; but excepting the half-starved Lyceum in the winter, and latterly the puny beginning of a library suggested by the state, no school for ourselves. We spend more on almost any article of bodily aliment or ailment than on our mental aliment.

It is time that we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that villages were universities, and their elder inhabitants the fellows of universities, with leisure—if they are indeed so well off—to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives. Shall the world be confined to one Paris or one Oxford forever? Cannot students be boarded here and get a liberal education under the skies of Concord? Can we not hire some Abelard to lecture to us? Alas! What with foddering the cattle and tending the store, we are kept from school too long, and our education is sadly neglected. In this country, the village should in some respects take the place of the nobleman of Europe. It should be the patron of the fine arts. It is rich enough. It wants only the magnanimity and refinement. It can spend money enough on such things as farmers and traders value, but it is thought Utopian to propose spending money for things which more intelligent men know to be of far more worth …

… If we will read newspapers, why not skip the gossip of Boston and take the best newspaper in the world at once?— not be sucking the pap of "neutral family" papers, or browsing "Olive-Branches" here in New England. Let the reports of all the learned societies come to us, and we will see if they know any thing. Why should we leave it to Harper & Brothers and Redding & Co. to select our reading? As the nobleman of cultivated taste surrounds himself with whatever conduces to his culture, genius, learning, wit, books, paintings, statuary, music, philosophical instruments, and the like; so let the village do,—not stop short at a pedagogue, a parson, a sexton, a parish library, and three selectmen, because our pilgrim forefathers got through a cold winter once on a bleak rock with these. To act collectively is according to the spirit of our institutions; and I am confident that, as our circumstances are more flourishing, our means are greater than the nobleman's. New England can hire all the wise men in the world to come and teach her, and board them round the while, and not be provincial at all. That is the uncommon school we want. Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men [and women]. If it is necessary, omit one bridge over the river, go round a little there, and throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us.

Feel free to use this section to take notes.

The Regeneration is about the creatives, thinkers, artists, entrepreneurs and writers who are making waves in the environmental movement and changing the conversation about climate change.

The goal of this magazine is to talk to them, learn about what they are doing and share it with you.

So, instead of watching the news, start reading about people creating a better planet.

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ISBN 9781545389324