

# Gen Y Shift Series

## “Generation Waking Up: Young People, Consciousness, and Social Change in the 21st Century” with Joshua Gorman (Jan. 28, 2013)

[0:00:00]

Ben:

Welcome, welcome everybody, back to the Gen Y Shift series. This is our first call of 2013. It is a pleasure to be with you all again. This is Ben Hart here with you. I'm very happy to be kicking off the new year or now we're quite always into the new year, but after a lull we're back for the new year. I'm very happy to have our guest on tonight who I'm going to introduce I just a second. Actually, I was just thinking as I was coming out and checking in with him that he and I met years ago in a café up in Seattle and kind of talking about our dreams in the future. I was hearing about his ideas and his visions and it's just so awesome to see it all coming to fruition so I'll jump right into it.

We have Joshua Gorman here who is the founder and coordinator of Generation Waking Up, which is a global campaign to ignite a generation of young people to bring forth a thriving, just, and sustainable world. He studied Global Youth and Social Change at George Mason University and serves on the Board of Directors for the Global Youth Action Network. He is a writer, speaker, organizer, trainer, and educator and is one of the leading voices championing the paradigm-shifting role of the millennial generation. He currently lives in the San Francisco area where he is completing a book titled Generation Waking Up: How a New Generation of Young People is Transforming Our World. Joshua, a pleasure to have you on, my man, welcome.

Joshua:

Thank you so much, Ben. I'm honored to be here and especially with you given, yeah, the many years that we've known each other and been able to watch each other grow and I'm excited to be part of kicking off the Gen Y call series for 2013. I watched your video. If you haven't watched it yet, definitely everyone check it out and I'm just really excited about what's going to be unfolding this year for the Gen Y series.

Ben:

Thank you, man. I really, really appreciate that. You know, one of the reasons why I'm so excited to have you on to kind of kick off this year is because when you look out at the landscape of social change organizations and personal growth and just yours is one of the few that is very specifically and powerfully geared towards our generation. So just I love that you held that vision since the very first time we met years ago

and it's just really exciting to hear what is unfolding what you were going through in the next hour.

So I'd love to begin actually and just dive into what your journey has been like to the places you are now and kind of what brought you to doing the work you're up to.

Joshua:

Right. Well I love to share my story and I love to hear other people's stories. Story is really at the center of my life and my work. Generation Waking Up itself one on hand it's a big story about our generation and within it there's all of our individual stories. So my personal story began in the suburbs of Washington DC. I grew up in a mainstream middleclass American family on the Maryland side of DC and I usually start my story in my teenage years really at the start of high school. At that time in my life, I suddenly started like waking up to the world. Really, youth is the time when we start to consciously come of age and so as I was starting to kind of become more self-aware and aware of the world around me, what I found was like a deeply broken shattered world. I was really sensitive and everywhere around me I just experienced so much suffering and it just really disturbed me, wounded me, and ultimately it sent me on a pretty big journey to try to make sense of out of it all, to try to discover what was the meaning of all the madness.

So in my high school years, I found myself in a deep existential life crisis really asking the big questions of life like why are we here, why is there so much suffering, like what really is unfolding on the planet. My best friend was Muslim. He was Pakistani-American and I was raised Christian and so I was raised with the worldview that told me that my friend is ultimately going to go to hell and his religion was telling him that I was going to go to hell. But we were best friends and we knew we had the same soul. We knew we were like ultimately the same type of human being and we knew there was something flat about these stories that we both were raised with.

So we lost our religions together and I share that because that really defined the next years of my life. Suddenly, I had no story, no way to make meaning out of the world around me, and all I was experiencing was suffering and just all of the challenges of our world. So I had to make sense of it. So fortunately I came across some great books, book probably people on this call have read by authors like Hermann Hesse, read a bunch of Hermann Hesse books and also Jack Kerouac that famous B generation author his book On the Road, definitely stirred in me what Joseph Campbell calls the call to adventure. Both Hermann Hesea and Jack Kerouac a lot of their books have these young protagonists who kind

of have a little bit of darkness around them and then trying to make sense out of life and they all go off on these different journeys and quests to find meaning.

[0:05:49]

So that stirred in me that same call to adventure and I ended up leaving home instead of going straight off to a university. I got really clear that I just needed to travel and get away from the world that I had grown up in. So I broke free, I left the east coast and I headed for the west coast and ended up in California and Oregon and went up to Alaska and just spent the next few years just really wandering and learning a lot about life, having a lot of great adventures and life experiences, and meeting people from all different backgrounds. Just discovering the largeness of life. Throughout it all, though I was really depressed and lost. Unfortunately, I drank a lot, I smoked, I was like just had a lot of negative life habits that young people take on in our world today when we are a little lost and confused.

So my existential crisis continued until I was about 21 and when I was 21, that really began the big shift in my personal life. I ended up in the islands of Hawaii and I ended up living on the big island of Hawaii. I thought I was just going to go there for a couple of weeks. I had a friend there, I'm just going to go and stay with them and then head on somewhere else but before I knew it, those two weeks turned into three years. So between the ages of 21 and 24, that's really when I went through a big personal transformation.

I'll keep it short. There were three primary trends that really led to turnaround in my life. First is I found myself working on a farm, on this beautiful tropical farm. I'm growing papaya and pineapple and mangoes and avocado and I started working for this farmer who had me working from sunrise to sunset. Suddenly, I was like just getting back in my body and I was living in community on his farm and started to eat healthy. I stopped drinking and smoking and I was exercising more. I was in this beautiful setting, this tropical island of Hawaii and slowly but surely all the negative thought patterns in my head just started to disperse. I started to find myself with like these still moments where I'll be standing on the land in Hawaii looking out at the horizon and just how these moments of like peace and slowly but surely like happiness. Like the joy of being alive slowly crept back into my life. So there was something about the natural world and getting back into my body and being surrounded by the power of nature that was deeply healing for me.

Secondly, I finally started to get spiritual and in my teens I never would have used the world spiritual and when I threw off my religion, I actually

became a little bit allergic and definitely skeptical about religion and spirituality. Even though the whole time I think it's safe to say that I was kind of on a spiritual journey even that I wasn't quite fully aware of it. But in Hawaii, I finally started to open up again and I started to meditate, I started to do yoga, started to just go and listen to different spiritual teachers, started to read a lot of spiritual texts from different religions and spiritual path. That started to really awaken in me my inner life and a lot of deep connection with myself and with the world around me. Ultimately, I had some really profound mystical experiences that started to open up when we start to pay attention to life and just really started to realize in this deep and profound way that I'm alive on this planet held by the vastness of space and the universe, which itself is held by this great mystery. It started to transform who I was and how I showed up in the world.

**[0:10:26]**

Lastly, and most importantly, I started to read a lot of really good books. I'm a book lover. If you really knew me, I have a huge library at home. I like digital books too but I also like paper books and I went on this huge knowledge quest too and just started to read voraciously everything I could get my hands on.

One significant author that came my way in Hawaii was the philosopher Ken Wilber who had been I know we both have been influenced by Ken's work in his integral philosophy. In Hawaii, I was first exposed to it and he writes books like a brief history of everything, right, these sweeping tours of life and evolution and history. His work opened me up to a perspective and a larger context that brought order to my understanding and reality and ultimately helped me make meaning out of the madness that I had known for so long all around me. Of course, his work he was pulling form and synthesizing from everywhere so it wasn't just his work but him bringing forth this powerful evolutionary context helped me understand that the moment we're alive in is not just the end of time. It's not just a time when the world is falling apart but it helped me realize that we're alive at one of the most exciting times ever in human history. That there's huge shift, this sweeping transformation underway. It's actually a gift and a privilege to be born at this time.

So as that realization started to sink deep within me, it became, yeah, the motivating force in my life. I suddenly realized that young people today, that my generation right, generation Y that we are the shift generation. We're born at this make it or break it moment and we have the opportunity to help say goodbye to this old world that's slowly phasing out and welcome in with wild applause this new world that's emerging all

around us. That actually many of us in our generation are actually at the fore of bringing this new world into existence.

So that's kind of the culmination of my story. At that point I was age 24, I had a really powerful epiphany one day where that realization just crystallized and I saw in my mind's eye just this vision of the transformation, of the shift and I saw the role that young people were playing and I saw these social movements rising up. The words generation waking up came into my life at that moment as a name for a vision and an understanding that I was seeing. At that moment, I knew that I had to go be a part of that. That I had to go join forces with my peers in my generation. That somehow I didn't know how but I knew somehow like we had to help bring healing and transformation.

So that began the story of Generation Waking Up and at age 24, I got clear I needed to move back into the world so I headed back to Washington DC where I was raised and went back to university there. I started to study global youth and social change and just started to learn more what are young people up to, what are youths, nonprofits, and student movements up to. I started to get clear about where things were at and how I could contribute and make a difference. That led to the creation of Generation Waking Up as a global young campaign, as an organization working to help ignite a generation of young people to bring forth a thriving, just, sustainable world ultimately helping young people in the planet make this transition happen. Help us be aware of what the larger context that we're coming of age in and actually supporting us in having the knowledge and the skills and the resources we need to actually make it happen.

**[0:15:13]**

So I'll stop there. That's the full circle journey that I went on kind of my own personal hero's journey and along the way it was very unconscious so I'm sharing all this in retrospect and it was definitely quite a ride. I know it's just one story of many that's playing out on the planet right now.

Ben:

Beautiful, Joshua. Thanks for sharing. It's really one of my favorite things actually as you said, mentioning the importance of story just sharing each other's hero's journey that we've gone, been on and that we continue to be on is super inspiring to me. So I appreciate you sharing it with some more detail than you might be often be able to. So many threads in there that I want to touch on. One piece that you began with that I think is really interesting and I'd love to talk more about is you mentioned the importance of story to yourself and then you said how Generation Waking Up as an organization and as an undertaking is really a big story

for our generation. I'm wondering if you could just say a bit more about what that looks like for you and how you see that playing out?

Joshua:

Yeah. Wonderful. So we use a story-based approach to creating social change and we use both personal and collective story to accomplish that. Generation Waking Up it's a generational narrative. It's a big story about our generation, about who we are, about the challenges and the opportunities we face and about the change that we're making happen.

There's a lot of kind of movement narratives or big narratives out there in the world that are helping accelerate the change that's underway. I'll use one of the first ones I got exposed to was the great turning. Joanna Macy has popularized that. David Korten wrote a great book about it. But the great turning is a name for this shift from an industrial growth society to a life sustaining society. Paul Hawken also wrote a book called Blessed Unrest a few years ago and Blessed Unrest is just another name for this movement narrative about this movement of movements that's emerging and rising up around the world, what Paul Hawken calls the humanity's immune response to the challenges we're facing.

So they're all big narratives that help motivate and inspire and they also help provide like a clear vision, a clear picture of where we're at and kind of where we're going. So Generation Waking Up serves that same purpose but it has a spotlight on young people, on today's young generation with a global context. So the first part of our work really is sharing that larger context and perspective of young people and helping them ask the big questions that show up within that story.

So our flagship program is called the Wakeup Experience. The full name is the Generation Waking Up Experience. We call it the wakeup for short and it goes through four questions. It looks at who are we, you know, who are we as a generation today and as young people within it and then it looks at where are we, like what's the state of the world we're inheriting. Thirdly, it looks at what has to change. You know, what are the challenges we're facing, what are the root causes of those challenges, and how can we change and transform them. Then lastly it looks like at what do we do now, how do we create change, what's my particular role in creating change. So it's kind of a story based journey we take young people on.

So that narrative approach is used in our videos, it's used in our core messaging and we also use it in our workshops and leadership programs and what we found is that story is a motivating force for people to engage in creating social change. There's a body of work that we pull

from created well at least stewarded by a man named Marshall Ganz. He teaches at Harvard and his work comes out of working with Caesar Chavez and the farm worker's movement and many movements since then and learning about the role of story and motivating people to organize and engage in social change. He's brought it all the way up to a real formal body of work called Public Narrative, which you can, Google and find lots of videos and resources on Public Narrative. The Obama campaign hired Marshall Ganz and his team to train up all their organizers in story based approaches for getting out the vote and getting people active and engaged locally.

**[0:20:14]**

So there's a lot of science now kind of emerging around the use of story and effectively it's bringing about social change. So we're in that school of thought and practice. That's a big part of what we're up to.

Ben:

Right. It's really fascinating. So I'm curious you mentioned sort of the great turning and the historical plate we're in that's such a significant movement in human history and that's certainly a unique aspect to where our generation stands. I'm curious what else do you see? You know, you've worked with some of the young people and it is your life history **[0:20:54] [Indiscernible]** thinking about our generation. I'm curious what for you, what else beyond that feels unique about today's young generation and what they're up to and what they're interested in or inspired by?

Joshua:

Yeah. Well it's definitely one of my passions to really watch our generation and to watch our story and our characteristics and both like the paradoxical characteristics. You know, like we're a very service oriented generation and we're also a very self-absorbed generation. You know, you can see both trends really loud and clear. So we get names like both generation me and generation we and actually both are true. So yeah, so just to name clearly also when we talk about generations, there's people draw the dates and many different places. So generation Y or the millenials or generation we or the digital generation there's so many names we can use, you know, it can vary from people start that generation in the late '70s and take it all the way up to the early 2000s and it starts at many different places. But basically we're definitely talking about young people alive today who are in their earlier 30s and 20s and definitely the second half of teens.

We share common characteristics around the world and it's also true that young people in the developing world have very different lives and stories than those in the developed world. So it's important that note like there are commonalities that we share but there's huge differences

as well. So given that though, technology let's name it from the get go like we're the most technologically equipped, sophisticated generations ever before. The younger ones of us all the way down to children today are referred to as digital natives right. We've grown up with technology and it's the only thing we've ever known. So amazing to look at the real little ones alive on the planet today who are already using their iPads and iPhones kind of more efficiently than their parents.

Yeah, so technology is a huge hallmark because it's connected us like never before and so we're the Facebook generation. We can hang out and have relationships with each other from across the planet right. I am in conversation with people probably on almost every continent and each week, you know, I'm always there's somebody that I'm having a conversation with who's on a different continent in the course of just one week.

So that's huge just the tools that we walk around with the power of the iPhone and the way it allows us now to both experience live and communicate about it with other than the information flow that is underway. Like we're just overwhelmed with both good and bad information but to focus on the good I mean wow like yes, we can still go to school but you have a whole university right just on Google, just on YouTube.

So that's the phenomenal part of who we are as a young generation. Definitely the most global generation we've ever seen before both globally connected but globally aware. Increasingly, we identify with our nation states, our nationalities but increasingly the identification as a global citizen, the recognition that we're part of this global village that includes us all, it's a part of who young people are today. So that's something to acknowledge and to celebrate.

**[0:25:19]**

You know, I think like there's a convergence of crisis happening in our time and a lot of the issues are converging to bring about one huge issue in our time, which is climate change. So I do need to also give a shout out to the climate change youth and student movements and really the climate movement as a whole, people who recognize what's happening around that and who are giving their lives to making sure that we shift rapidly away from the fossil fuel era into the clean energy era. That is an issue area that is galvanizing more of our generation than any other issue. Clearly, it's a cross generational issue, it's a cross cultural issue. It's bringing us together across continents.



This coming summer there's an exciting conference happening in Turkey called Global Power Shift. Power Shift has been a huge conference in the United States bringing together the whole climate youth and student movement. It's been traveling now to different countries and they're hosting the first global power shift this summer where young leaders will come from every continent and from many, many countries on the planet to get trained up and skilled at to go back and launch local and national initiatives around different climate issues. So that defines our generation. There's so many other issues that are just as essential and important for us to be paying attention to and engage but climate is big.

One last thing because I could highlight other things and you're free to ask more but I also love to acknowledge that social entrepreneurship is a huge trend that's come of age just as our generation has come of age. So we have more inspired, fired up young entrepreneurs on the planet than ever before and what's so exciting is like our creativity, our vision, our energy, the innovation that just comes through us is entering every sector of society. So we have young entrepreneurs not just going into business but going into education, going into politics, using the power of technology and the connectedness we have in the world today and creating solutions and enterprises, profitable enterprises that are also in alignment with sustainability and both caring for a community and the planet along with profit. So these enterprises are entering into every sector and they're a significant part of helping us remake our world. So social entrepreneurship is a huge part of who we are.

Ben:

Yeah, that's great. That's really great and that leads into right where I want to go next. You mentioned technology and social entrepreneurship and I'm curious if there's anything else you might add around just the ways that our generation, you know, millennial generation is approaching social change in general? You know, it seems like there is a big movement away from – necessarily because of technology that things are happening very differently. You know, you were on a summit a year ago with us and just talking a bit about Arab spring just how all of that went down. It just seems like social change is unfolding in a very new way that we have yet to fully understand kind of this new way that's rising. I'm wondering what you see in that or what excites you about that?

Joshua:

Yeah. So yeah, I love that metaphor too a new way of a social change and it really is kind of rising up and making its mark all around the world. Yes, so I'll speak to the technology part of that and then a couple other dimensions that I think are really exciting and important for us to highlight. So I mean let's just start with what you already named. The Arab spring is definitely one of the more recent examples of the power of

Facebook and Twitter in the Middle East for young people to connect and to mobilize and to communicate and to create awareness and ultimately for that to be what brought thousands and thousands of people out on to the streets in countries like Tunisia and Egypt. I mean I was in Egypt two weeks before the revolution there and we did not see it coming and two weeks later there were just thousands and thousands of people in the streets that ultimately led to the overthrow of the government there.

**[0:30:23]**

So technology is completely remaking how we organize, how we communicate with each other, how we put pressure on the different pressure points that are needed when you're launching a campaign, a social or political campaign. Along with kind of protest movements and I guess I'd give a shout-out to the Occupy Movement. You know, Occupy the media helped it blow up but it was also the online infrastructure that allowed the self-organizing process to unfold. The core ingredients of kind of a local Occupy Movement were readily available online and then it was so easy to like create your local website and create your local network and have a blog and start –you know, just keep people informed on when the local gatherings and rallies were happening and then to be connecting with each other all around North America and ultimately around the world.

We're also a generation that came of age with groups like Move On and AVAS and Change.org. You know, Move On and ultimately AVAs went global. They used the power of emails and these huge networks of people to both rally funds that then is used to promote and put pressure in different places to create social change but also just now the power of petitions and like the collective global voice. AVAs is always running global campaigns to help bring awareness and rally attention around different causes.

Change.org empowers everybody to launch their own petitions and campaigns and causes and gives them the tools and resources. It's so simple, you just sign up and start spreading the word and suddenly you can have so much support around you and bring so much attention. So it's a huge piece of the puzzle. Like online organizing and activism does not replace offline organizing and activism but both are still so essential, but these tools just allow us to step it up. Now they allow it to happen in very decentralized ways. They allow us to be connected and coordinated all around the world and in different regions, which before has been really hard to do and allows it to happen like at the snap of a fingers, right a text, a tweet, a Facebook post. I mean it can travel and spread so rapidly. So just the speed, the pace of change has also accelerated.

So that's super exciting and I think it's only going to get more and more exciting. The tools that are being developed, it just keeps coming and coming and coming. So activists, organizers and change makers today definitely have to go to tech boot camp. There's actually a really great nonprofit called the New Organizing Institute that just emerged in this last decade as a response to all these new approaches to creating social change so it's a great place to check out.

I also want to name that there's also part of this new wave of change is a different type of change maker. I think again this isn't true across the board but increasingly so I am experiencing and seeing change makers who really value the importance of inner and outer change. You have people who are totally out there active and engaged and on the frontlines of different causes political and environmental and social causes, but then they also are waking up and meditating in the morning or they're doing yoga at night or they're eating really healthy and embodying their values that way.

You know, it probably comes from many places but I think this is definitely an awesome example of generation Y building on the boomer generation and all they brought forward. Because a lot of the personal growth world and the human potential movement and the health food movement and the consciousness movement, they really came of age before us and so as we step in the change making I think it's just been a lot more embodied in our lives. So I'm seeing these healthy holistic change makers out there doing the good work and it's really inspiring and there's still a lot of growing room there. There's still lots of burnout. There's so much work that needs to be done but I'm definitely seeing these like inspired spiritual activists who get the importance of inner and outer change.

**[0:35:49]**

Connected to that is also a recognition that all the issues are connected and that we need whole system change. You know, we need whole scale change right now on the planet and that's important because I think it changes our orientation to change making. In the climate change movement, it's not just about carbon. You know, a huge conversation about climate movement around climate justice and environmental justice and getting the –yeah, how social justice is just as important to the conversation as the environmental issues. So you're seeing a convergence of the different issues coming together and helping bring about these kind of super movements that are multi issue. You're seeing the food justice movement which is helping bring about healthy local sustainable food while also like uplifting low income people and communities who've traditionally just had a very different story and the

food that they've been eating and a very different story about what their communities look like, what their streets look like.

So I'm really excited about our generation's kind of systemic view of change and our ability to really connect the issues up to -- you know, see to connect the dots. Even when we focus in in a particular issue area or a cluster of issue areas, we recognize the need and the importance for all the other issue areas and so we can stand in solidarity with each other more than ever before. A little less competition between the movements out there and a lot more collaboration. Of course still lots of room to grow but I think it's a sign that there's a shared vision, a larger vision that's kind of beginning to hold us all and guide us forward. I think ultimately that's what's needed for this movement of movements to really fully be expressed and bring about the healing and transformation that we're all committed to.

Ben: Amen, brother, yes, I think that's so true. It's such a beautiful facet to the people our age who I meet who are really aligning their lives and committing their lives to work like this. That there is such a sense of the connection to all things and in turn all others who are coming from a similar place of whole world centrism you know, it's all the same movement but different facets of it all. You know you mentioned you actually are intuiting some of my questions coming up. Because what occurred for me as you are talking is you mentioned a need for people to go to digital boot camp and you mentioned there's more and more social activists who are really approaching it in a holistic way in terms of their inner life and their outer work . What that leads me to is I'm curious what other skills or awarenesses you think that young change makers need to be effective in their lives and in the world, the changes they want to bring about and the once you have them go through the wake up or go through the journey of their lives and they're able to hold that larger context for the shift in the planet? What is it that you feel like they most need to be effective?

Joshua: That's a great question. Well I think there's a really exciting curriculum for young change makers today. So like I love to playfully dream about like what would the most like holistic or integral or integrated boot camp look like for a young change maker today. You know, we're working at that with our workshops and leadership training programs but we still have a ways to go. A couple of other things that I would share, one is it comes from persona. life as someone who had a lot of childhood wounding. Again, this isn't true across the board but sadly it's true probably more often than not that as we grow up in the world and at such a broken world we are deeply wounded right often by our parents

first and then eventually by our peers and by our society. That wounding inside shapes who we are. It shapes how we show up, it shapes how we respond to pressure and challenges.

[0:40:35]

So a lot of times that wounding shows up in our behavior and how we react to different situations and how we communicate and how we express ourselves. A lot of times, we're very unconscious, right, to that kind of early formation. We do a lot of work around personal growth, self-awareness, diving into our personal wounds, our triggers, our reaction styles, our communication styles. So I'm sharing this from personal experience as someone who had a lot of wounding and has kind of picked up a lot of bad habits, has inherited a lot of old patterns. Even though young people have less – it's like less solidified which is what's exciting right. If we start doing the work early on enough, we can change much more rapidly than someone who's in the middle of their life or towards the end of their life.

But we still have a lot of work to do even if we're waking up and starting to do personal growth work at 17 or 21 or 25. Yeah. So that's an important part of the curriculum developing emotional intelligence, developing that self-knowledge. Another big part of our work is as simple as like how do we set priorities and goals and actually follow through with integrity like I think to really make projects happen and make change happen. We're in a world like there's so many possibilities and there's so much to do and there's so much distraction and so it's like how do you really focus and stay on track and how do you focus on what you really are committed and how do you do so in a way that's aligned with your deepest values it gets really hard.

You know, I didn't get schooled or trained up in time management and project management and life management ultimately. So we offer some of those core skillsets and I think they're essential. They're essential for the work you may be doing in your business or in your social change work but they're essential for life. I know we're all committed to making the most of our lives and so these are just tools and resources that we all need as part of our foundation.

So just a couple more, plenty more but not enough time to cover the whole curriculum.

Ben:

Right on. That sounds great, my man. Well we're at that special time and I want to invite on people who are listening in you too asking questions you have of Joshua. You can go ahead on the webcast, you can type your questions in and if you're on the phone line, you can go ahead and hit 1

and we will take questions as they come. So get to a phone hit 1, if you're on the webcast go ahead and type your questions in.

As you're moving in that direction while you're thinking of your question, I just want to take it in a more personal direction with you, Joshua. Because I think it's so important as a young change maker, as a young leader in our generation just really sharing and the more we share how we go through those growth periods and how we go through those as you just said like learning how to do time management just there's so many things that we are learning now together. I think a big part of this year or at least my hope is to allow us to open that conversation more into what is alive and your life. So one point in your life that I'm really aware of is that you were married recently. Relationship is such a beautiful crucible for growth and expression in the world. I'd love to hear, do you have any reflections on that or any tips for people who are going through their own journey with relationship and how it supports our work in the world and the fruition? Yeah --

Joshua: Yeah.

Ben: I offer you a moment to talk about relationship.

Joshua: That's great. I mean I'm excited to -- we should have the whole call series right just on Gen Y and relationships and you know, what it looks like and that will be a great intergenerational one as well.

**[0:45:09]**

Yeah, I'm a newlywed. I was married, I got married twice, east coast, west coast just to make sure everyone could join us and it's a big deal I think for... I'm just going to speak as a younger man, for me to like really step up and get clear and to make a commitment like that was a huge rite of passage. But you named it so powerfully. Relationship is such a crucible for growth and expression and I can honestly say that I had transformed a lot before I was in deep relationship. I've been through a lot of kind of awakening and healing but it wasn't until I stepped into this relationship, we've been together now over three and a half years, that I started to do even deeper work. There was so much work that I wasn't doing just because it was so easy to like hide from it or not fully engage it or just kind of push it off to the side and want to do it later.

But being in a relationship, I had that constant reflection in someone that I couldn't get away from right. I'm committed to being in the relationship and so I had to just keep showing up and doing the work and then I'm getting feedback and reflections from my partner and I have to take it in. You know, I'm blessed to have a partner who is very gifted at offering

feedback. She loves feedback. She's a phenomenal communicator. She's helped grow me like nothing before in my life. So I really honor that and celebrate that.

I just want to acknowledge that it's hard to be in a relationship and it's hard to stay in a relationship and we live in a society where so many relationships are broken. You know, my wife and I both come from divorced families and so there's the part of us that we're just kind of cynical and skeptical about marriage and long term commitment. So we're healing a lot of those wounds and we haven't had a lot of examples of what does relationship look like in a really healthy way, in way that we want to model after. So in some ways we're finding those examples that are out there because there are some out there and we definitely have sought some really special people for mentoring and modeling. But we also are having to just make the road as we go which I think is true for a lot of young people in relationship today.

So yes, I highly encourage people to like if you're in a relationship and you're questioning should you stay in it, you know, well stay in that questioning, you know and maybe stick with it, maybe not, but definitely really want to honor the role and power of relationship and personal growth and transformation.

Ben:

I love it. Thank you, Joshua. It's such a juicy topic. I definitely agree we could talk about it for hours. I mean probably the deepest and most exciting and committed relationship in my life thus far and it's so fun to hear someone else another man especially talk about it. I can almost feel like the beautiful humbling in your voice says well the inspiration that comes through and you're really facing all the things that come up and just the beauty that comes through as well so. Beautiful, well I look forward to talking about that in more depth down the line. I definitely want to honor the questions that people have coming in so we'd jump over to those, which is a great one here saying how do you relate to the apparent negative challenges in the world like starvation, war, climate change, etc., and not push them away while also staying positive and believing in the great turning?

Joshua:

Wow. That's a really powerful potent question that I think I struggle with and a lot of my peers struggle with and I know people of all ages struggle with. You know, like if we're really honest and open and looking at what's happening on the planet, I mean it's just it's overwhelming. The pain and the sorrow and the hurt that can come from like just allowing ourselves to feel the suffering and destruction. It's really difficult, it's really discouraging.

[0:50:07]

You know, all I can say is like I know, I try to hold that middle space. You know, I practice just always staying open and being vulnerable and by vulnerable, I mean in the sense being open to that pain and suffering and allowing myself to feel what's real, you know, what is the real story, the real experience in the world. Yet while I'm kind of holding myself open and allowing myself to feel grief and pain and sorrow like also still like standing strong. You know, standing with an open heart, with a clear vision and just stepping forward each day.

You know, I have, I don't know if you call it a gift or some people might not think it a gift but I'm definitely someone who personally have a lot of faith and hope. It's just not blind faith but I definitely have some deep optimism. I like just to think of it as sober optimism but there is just a sense in me that like life has come this far. Like I know it's not going to be perfect but this story has to keep going and I'm going to give myself to it and show up as powerfully as I can.

But I know at times it's hard. Like when we're like the midst of a crisis or living or growing up in a place where there's not a lot of support and help and resources, it's just people are in survival mode and so I also recognize that I have a lot of privilege that allows me to make it through each day. Some people that's not the reality, they're coming of age and so I'm just being honest. That's how I relate to it and I weather the storms, the good days and the bad days and I just keep getting back up and marching on.

Ben: Beautiful. I love that. Thank you, Joshua, and thank you for the question. Another one that just came in here is around money and social change. They're asking I'm confused about money where money meets social change. Most specifically I'm wondering what you'd advice for someone who wants to be a change maker when there are very few jobs for that?

Joshua: Yeah. I think that is again a really relevant question too. The majority of young people in the world today, I know it's especially alive for young people who are just graduating from school be it from high school or from the university and suddenly we have debt or we don't have the security of our families helping us anymore. It's like we want to go out there and make a difference and yet how do we do it. How do we live meaningful lives and make money while we're at it be it a lot of money or just enough to live good lives.

What's exciting is I think there is burgeoning field of (1) social entrepreneurship so there's a lot of just great new work out there. There's a lot of ability to create our own work. There's a need for small



businesses and startups. So if you're someone who has a clear vision or an emerging sense of what's your passion about, I definitely really encourage people to go out there and make it happen, give it a go.

Also sometimes, I think we're unrealistic though and we want to go right into having a meaningful job that also pays us six figures. We kind of want to have it all and I think our generation we can be entitled or have a lot of high expectations. So I've learned personally that I have had to make sacrifices and I have had to be patient and work different jobs as I was finding my way. I did find myself in jobs that I didn't love and I was doing all my passion projects on the side but slowly but surely I started to find my way into more meaningful work until. You know, today definitely I'm blessed to work full time with Generation Waking Up so I get to live and breathe my purpose which is a gift.

**[0:55:12]**

There's a great book that came out recently and I am going to have to – it's called making meaning, I don't know. Ben, do you know this recent book that came out by – it's called Making Good: Finding Meaning, Money, and Community. It's a new book by two young millenials an American and a Canadian. So the full title is Making Good: Finding Meaning, Money, and Community in a Changing World. Actually just came out about a year ago. It's a really awesome book. So for anyone who's really living those questions right now, I highly recommend you read it. It's a book I often give to friends and recommend to young people that I work with.

Ben: Good. Great. We're getting to the end of our time so I'm going to put another question here. This one is saying you talked about religion in your early life, I'm wondering what your spirituality looks like now and what role it plays in your life?

Joshua: So I would identify today as both a spiritual and religious person but I've had to kind of redefine what those terms mean for me. You know, I grew up Christian so god was the word that was used for the big picture or, yeah, the great spirit or there's so many different words. My actually word is like life with a capital L. It's kind of the word that works for me that helps me connect to that larger mystery, that larger kind of transcendent force.

But I am still someone without a literal spiritual home. I'm not a part of a particular spiritual community or a religion. Definitely, I feel spiritually at home in the universe now, which is a gift, but I'm still someone who dabbles in many different traditions. I'll be honest. I have hopes and passions that in our generation that not only are we going to evolve our

existing religions including our mainstream religions but also continue to evolve our different spiritual traditions. But I am often someone who celebrates new religions like the emergence of new spiritual communities and religious communities that increasingly are very universal in their approach to spirituality and religion. So their understanding of what god is or what spirit is or what life is. It has a very universal approach to it.

So that's definitely my orientation but I love to read from all the great religious and spiritual text. I love to go, I still will go to a church and love to sing and open my heart or I'll go and do meditation or I'll go and listen to a spiritual teacher somewhere. If I'm in Egypt, you know, I just love, yeah, the Islamic culture there. I mean so I value it all and in daily way, I've developed my own personal practices for how I connect in with myself and I try to do those. Sometimes, I fail and sometimes I succeed and I just keep on going.

Ben: Right on. That's great, man. I love it. Well one final question I have for you, which I tend to ask of all the guests we have on is I'm wondering what you describe as your biggest growing edge right now? What do you see as the next place that you're stepping into in yourself and what challenges are you coming up against and what do you see as where is the next level of who Joshua is becoming?

Joshua: Yeah. Wow. I could share a lot. One is I'm a young man who's transitioning into manhood. You know, I've recently been married which is definitely a big part of signaling my transition. I definitely feel like I've been out of youth for a while. I've been in young adulthood for a while. I'm definitely in my early manhood and so I'm learning a lot about what does it mean to be a husband. I think in the years ahead you know, I may end up in that stage of life or family comes into the mix. Lots of fun stuff like that.

**[1:00:03]**

So that's a big growing edge and then also I'll just say I'm overwhelmed with great possibilities. I just love to be of service. I say yes to a lot of things. So I know this is common for people but one of my biggest growing edges is how do I slow down, how do I trust that enough is enough. That I don't have to do everything, that personally I'm not going to make it all happen myself. I'm just one part of that larger story. So finding that right life balance is really tricky. I'm committed to just continuing to work with it and to grow that edge.

Ben: Beautiful. Well, my man, I love that and I definitely celebrate and honor everything that's unfolding. It actually just occurred to me, I want to publicly acknowledge you because I realize that as we're having this

conversation that in the few years since I've met you, I think there are times when I think about my own next level of social activism in the world that you kind of play a role for me as someone who inspires me into that. I think I tend towards more of the spiritual personal growth internal evolution transformation which is beautiful. But I think you're someone who inspires me to continue to take it out into the world and out into the world so I really want to thank you for that and appreciate how you're doing that for many, many people around the planet.

Joshua: Thanks so much, Ben. Well I'm honored again to join you on this call. I greatly value the work that you're up to and I'm really excited about continuing to listen to the Gen Y Shift series and really honored to have you as a friend and colleague and brother and I know there's a lot more ahead of us.

Ben: Absolutely. Thanks so much, my man. One final thing, what would be the best place for people to keep in touch or connect with your work?

Joshua: Yeah. So it's real simple. It's just GenUp.net. So that's GenUp.net. That's the website for Generation Waking Up. We call it Gen Up for short and you can reach me at [Joshua@genup.net](mailto:Joshua@genup.net) and friendly and love to hear from people. So definitely reach out, learn more about our work and let's all make it happen together. It's underway it's, yeah, just a blessing so be a part of it all.

Ben: Man, it is indeed underway and beautiful. Well thank you so much, Joshua. Big time love to you and big time love to all of you out there listening in. Thanks so much for being here and as always please write in and let me know if you have any request for guests, any feedback you want to share at [GenY@TheShiftNetwork.com](mailto:GenY@TheShiftNetwork.com). We'll be back with you soon. Until then have a beautiful morning, afternoon, evening wherever you are in the world. Big time love. Thanks everybody.

**[1:03:03] End of Audio**

**© 2013 The Shift Network. All rights reserved.**