

Ben, Thomas Greene Park, Gowanus, Brooklyn
June 26, 2021

Ben (00:00):

If I hold it, it'll like...change.

Rachel (00:02):

No, that's perfect.

Ben (00:07):

But sounds like it will go cuh, cuh, cuh on the close, but I think this should be fine.

Rachel (00:08):

Yeah. So Ben, when you think about global warming or climate change, what do you think about and how do you feel?

Ben (00:21):

I feel sad. I think about the end of things as we've known them and now that I have a kid, I think a lot about her future and what kind of a world she'll live in

Rachel (00:44):

What does that mean? "The end of things as we've known them?"

Ben (00:49):

Well, I think being, of my socioeconomic background and when I was born, coming from Canada, parents were sort of like, I think they're the Baby Boomer generation. And sort of a sense of their world getting better in their lifetimes, that their involvement in the 1960s, were Baby Boomers before...

Rachel (01:20):

Our parents were Baby Boomers.

Ben (01:21):

They were?

Rachel (01:22):

Yeah.

Ben (01:22):

So my point is growing up, there was a sense of the world is just getting better. All the things are going to get better. We work hard, we strive hard. There's all these problems around us, but change is always towards the better, and this is sort of how I was raised. And I think there's just a sense of realizing sometimes change takes us in places that aren't necessarily for the better. And it feels like we're kind of entering that kind of a place right now. And the next generation will come up in a time where things aren't better and things are hard and difficult and hopefully their change will push it back.

Rachel (02:02):

Is this something that you were thinking about before you had your daughter?

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Ben (02:09):

It was less, yeah, there was a sense of, "Oh, it's okay. It'll all start crapping out by the time I'm an old person, but I'll be dying anyway." A kind of selfishness in that sense and feeling that you do want to your children or your child to have a life that is full and rich and where can be happy.

Rachel (02:37):

So you did have a kid with sort of full knowledge of what you know now?

Ben (02:44):

Yeah. I think about it a lot. Like why are we bringing more kids into the world and what kind of a world are we leaving the next generation? And why, am I overpopulating the place? But there's some sort of also urge or something that goes beyond intellect to make a kid and to love your kid and to raise your kid, at least for me. I've sort of gone off the topic a little bit.

Rachel (03:09):

No, you're not.

Ben (03:09):

With the environment.

Rachel (03:12):

So how do you feel?

Ben (03:12):

You know, you do feel helpless and there's... I on a personal level feel that I'm not doing enough, and I'm not getting involved enough. I feel life is so full of little... I don't know how people find the time and it feels like a lame excuse, but I just feel between getting your kid to daycare and trying to work on the art you're passionate about, and trying to make money to live and trying to cook your dinner. There's very little time for me anyways, to get really politically involved in a way that could make even small changes. I do feel it needs to be more bigger policy changes, but I know small things help too, individual things help.

Rachel (03:55):

But you're saying that right now....

Speaker 3 (03:55):

That the bigger policy changes require showing up in ways that you don't feel like you have time to do?

Ben (04:05):

Maybe not have time, but have the conviction, the willpower to consistently be at protests, to consistently be calling and lobbying, I guess, on a local government level and on a state level and getting involved even in supporting candidates, I believe in. And flyering for them or whatever it is, really putting my time into trying to make it better.

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Rachel (04:34):

Someone actually like yesterday, who I talked to described it as the inertia of your daily life.

Ben (04:43):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rachel (04:47):

So what changes have you noticed locally in your local landscapes and weather patterns here in New York since you moved here? You've got like five minutes? Oh, great. Good. Yeah. So what changes have you noticed?

Ben (05:02):

I've been in New York for 10 years?

Rachel (05:04):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ben (05:08):

I think change is related to your perspective, too. I feel New York has, I think it's, I don't know if it's got... I feel that the heat is longer in the summer and the winters seems shorter. I don't know if there's specific... I remember sweltering, hot heat waves 10 years ago as well. And, and days of a 104 and 106, but it does feel like the seasons are more uniform now and that sort of freak little storms or freak little events seem to be more often. And that in general, the summers are just longer and hotter and always sticky.

Rachel (05:55):

What does it feel like? I mean, do you have a feeling when you kind of notice change? What does it feel like for the physical presence of change to be confronted with that?

Ben (06:11):

Yeah, I don't know. It just feels sort of like a little sad, I guess, I guess for me I can be very, I can get too melancholic about it.

Rachel (06:17):

Yeah.

Ben (06:18):

And I just feel like it's a... we're in a season of decline in some way. And also, there's also a certain social awareness that's changing for the better, I think. And there are certain council members who are actually socialists and that wouldn't have happened 10 years ago. And there is some change that I think... and technology-wise, I'm not aware of it enough, but I actually think we are at a place where we could be using technology that really would be better for the planet. And I think that's especially frustrating, is seeing that we could implement massive policy changes that could make a difference,

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because we do have the scientific technology to do it now. And we're just not taking advantage of that, there's too much... Yeah.

Rachel (07:09):

So what do you feel hopeful for?

Ben (07:11):

This is a good question, I feel hopeful that things go in waves, that things have seasons and that will come back to a time, I guess, where people are.... What do I feel helpful for? I don't know, maybe I feel no hope at all. I think I'm hopeful for a time when the big dream of success and power is less important to people and they can get involved in just the health of their intimate worlds a little more. Maybe that seems abstract, but I don't know. I feel it goes in sort of waves, I think. Yeah. I don't know. I'm hopeful next... maybe there's more involvement in coming generations to change things. I think when people grow up in times, it relates to what I was saying before, when you grow up in a sort of positive time, you sort of think it'll always be easier. When you grow up in a tougher time I think you're more,...maybe you realize a necessity to change things.

Rachel (08:49):

My last question, are there questions you're asking yourself right now in relation to this topic?

Ben (08:58):

To the environment?

Rachel (08:59):

Yeah. And the future.

Ben (09:01):

Yeah. I mean the big question is why, the big question is why are we haggling over the corporate tax rate going 4% or 5% higher or lower? It like, should we fix this pothole or not? And it just seems like the problems are so much bigger, and there does seem to be a big question about why people can't... yeah, again, on a policy level, just clue into it, tap into it. It just feels like it's so evident that we're in trouble.

Rachel (09:35):

Yeah.

Ben (09:35):

And it's just a little bit mind-boggling actually that people...

Rachel (09:42):

I know I'm asking the same question.

Ben (09:45):

I mean, it's just like, yeah.

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Rachel (09:48):

Why is it so impossible to move any needle?

Ben (09:50):

Yes. It's just so strange to me, it's so beyond, and people are, "Well, it goes against capitalist values to put regulations in place," or something abstract. It just seems so, so absurd. We have the technology, we could put a lot of policies in place that would help in it.

Rachel (10:10):

Yeah.

Ben (10:10):

You know, in a major way. And perhaps it would be difficult economically, I'm not an economist. I don't know. But I also feel that if there was real incentive for industry to shift to another way of doing things that ultimately economically, we'd all sort of level out and be fine despite maybe a few tougher years again of transition, is probably my feeling about it. So the big question is why aren't we doing something bigger on a policy level? And there's always the questions of why I'm not more involved.

Rachel (10:49):

Why aren't you more involved?

Ben (10:51):

I don't know. It seems like a huge, overwhelming task. It feels a little like you don't know where to begin sometimes.

Rachel (11:01):

Yep. I feel the same way.

Ben (11:05):

But this is getting involved what you're doing and...

Rachel (11:08):

Talking to people.

Ben (11:09):

Yeah. But it's admirable. It forces them to think and it just creates awareness about something and sort of reflection about something.

Rachel (11:19):

I hope so.

Ben (11:20):

And that in turn, you might motivate people to get involved.

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Rachel (11:27):

I hope so.

Ben (11:28):

To fight for the change.

Rachel (11:28):

I guess that's one of the ideas. Thanks, Ben.

Ben (11:33):

You're welcome.

Rachel (11:33):

This was really great.