

Doubrrava, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburt, Brooklyn
June 28, 2021

Rachel (00:00):

So we'll start recording. And like I said, we can take breaks whenever you need. Okay. So Doubravka, tell me your name, where you grew up, where you live now, what you do, sort of any information you'd like us to know about you.

Doubrrava (00:24):

I am from Czech Republic. My mother is from Poland. I grew up in industry area, close to Polish borders, where was a textile industry. And later when I was graduated high school, I went to the Prague to study acting and drama. And later I finished the, how to say, diploma, my master degree in the other university, in Olomouc in east part of Czech Republic. I studied the Polish language and theater science there and education. The ecology we had in the, like how to say, in the secondary school, we had some, it was the beginning after when the communist regime was finished, we had start the environment education before it was not existing. It was a very big, like a cold of the industry. And I was pretty sick. All my childhood because of the little dust in air...

Rachel (01:59):

Like smog.

Doubrrava (02:01):

Yes, smog but plus some little...

Rachel (02:07):

Like particulates.

Doubrrava (02:08):

Particles yes, yes. And I went to the special summer, like special camp, summer camp, or not only summer in a, like we travel to, with a group of children to the forest and we try to heal our chronic bronchitis, asthma and immunity, like low immunity. And I was lucky that my mother was from Poland and they took me to the boat and we would sail in Baltic Sea which was pretty clean that time. Not as much because it is a sea, which is a lot of rivers spread. And it was not a policy of clean... Many, many boats, like big boats, containers took what was a lot of like change gasoline on the sea and spread so many.

And my mother was working in that Polish shore as a hydro biologist, she took a plankton from the sea and find who did this dirty, but it was not too much possible to find the, put the, how to say punishment to there. And she took me as a like ecology education, at home because she was educated, sympathy thing with the green piece ideas. And because we travel over on the boat, we have a possibility to see many places where it is clean, where it's not clean, especially the beach, the plastic and the water, other like stuff like cans and other metals and the water and the stuff like this, that real topic that. The global warming I experience special in my country. It's like very like climate change that they never have a humidity like here the summer. And nobody use air condition in my life. And right now people must to buy air conditions and they have a lot, the lost of the deep water is less water and a lot of dry...

Rachel (04:55):

Like a drought.

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Doubrrava (04:56):

Yeah. Drought. That's all.

Rachel (04:58):

So let me ask you this question that I ask everyone to start off with. When you think about global warming and climate change, what do you think about and how do you feel?

Doubrrava (05:09):

Mm, I feel scary about the future for the children, our next generations, what they would do with the planet, with even here, we have a lot of civilization, sick diseases and how they will live, the quality of their lives in the future? Because money is not everything. You cannot buy the clean water or some, that the politic and the situation now is very difficult. And it is nothing like economy is dictated some way or to journey, which is going to that end. And it make me feel uncomfortable. And I really want to do something to help, but I don't know what to do too much. It's not in my hand on my shoulders.

Rachel (06:28):

So there's also like a feeling of powerlessness.

Doubrrava (06:32):

Yes.

Rachel (06:36):

So in the Czech Republic where you grew up and do you go back often, how do you know that the summers are getting much more humid and [crosstalk 00:06:47]

Doubrrava (06:47):

I visited.

Rachel (06:48):

You do visit?

Doubrrava (06:49):

I do visit. And I'm reading every day the newspaper in my language it's easier. And I'm interested in my home country [inaudible 00:07:01]

Rachel (07:02):

And how long have you been in New York?

Doubrrava (07:03):

I am in New York two years.

Rachel (07:06):

Okay.

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Doubrrava (07:06):

And in the United States six.

Rachel (07:09):

Okay.

Doubrrava (07:10):

So it is not very long, so I don't have too much experience in United States.

Rachel (07:14):

But you do have a lot of experience in the Czech Republic.

Doubrrava (07:17):

Yes. Yeah.

Rachel (07:18):

So I want to ask you about what were the rhythms, the seasonal rhythms that helped you mark time when you were growing up in the Czech Republic. What did the weather and the landscape feel like the seasons feel like in the Czech Republic growing up?

Doubrrava (07:31):

I'm not sure if I understand exactly the question you...

Rachel (07:37):

Well, I guess I'm really asking you, you talked a little bit about this, but I'd like to learn more about what changes have you noticed. So what did the weather and seasons feel like when you were growing up and how are they different now? And when did you start noticing those changes?

Doubrrava (07:56):

It was pretty, when I was like my childhood and a young age, because I'm 42. So the first 20 years of my life, from like 1980 to 1990, for example, it was very clear spring. Spring was much longer than now, the springtime. The summer was less humidity and it was not as extreme, like right now is in my country, the tornado, which never been. The people didn't prepare for that and that they are shocked and many people die there.

Rachel (08:44):

Wow.

Doubrrava (08:45):

And it never happened and resp... And like last 20 years, I see that it was like in the summer, three weeks raining, heavy raining after that is no rain. It is very mixing, in the middle of... The winter stop to be winter that it is. And when I was kid, we do the sliding, we do, the skiing, ice skating, same place when I was adult, like stop, we never have a snow. We have, if it snow, it just only one day. And it was zero. It was not too much freezing. It was like zero celsius and a lot of mosquitoes, insects was too much

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and many people died from the [inaudible 00:09:57] the sickness of the mosquito, the insects, because it is too much out of control.

Rachel (10:07):

A Lot of change. What does that feel like when you experience...

Doubrrava (10:07):

Because the winter is not the winter.

Rachel (10:12):

So when you experiencing unseasonable weather, when you're having a, experiencing a winter that doesn't have snow, what does that feel like on an emotional level?

Doubrrava (10:25):

It is pretty sad and it is not only my feeling, but my, like my age, people and older, they see, we remember the winter when we go do snowman, that our kids cannot do because it is in the mountain. They put the fake snow, which is also not healthy for the, because too much water. And it is not existing, like four seasons already. It is some mixing, like not clear season. And nature is very, the flowers are, or the tree, like start too early and freezing, like for the, to say farm.

Rachel (11:13):

Yeah, for agriculture?

Doubrrava (11:13):

Agriculture is very, very hard to grow some plants which they already have tradition to grow.

Rachel (11:20):

So what is that? I mean, it sounds like a loss, and it also sounds like where you grew up no longer feels like what it used to feel like.

Doubrrava (11:31):

Yes. We all, for example, Mrs. Snow and the Christmas or that it is already not possible. Like [crosstalk 00:11:41]

Rachel (11:40):

So I'm going to keep asking you about emotion words because that's what I'm focusing on in this project. So what does that feel like when you're encountering change? When you're living through a warm winter, what's the emotional experience of that? What comes up for you?

Doubrrava (12:02):

It is something like existential depression or the kind of feeling like depression and yes. How to say, the powerful, feels powerful because it is very quick change. And mentally I not follow, mentally I ways shopping the clothes for winter, even if I don't wear it. The gloves, the, because in my life was the rhythm of the season was so important. And now it is like everything melting together, mixing together.

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Always, I am now very like, be standby what is going to happen. I am checking weather very carefully, because never know what have, how to dress up, what to do, like be ready for everything, every kind of the cold, the hot, the rain. It is unpredictable and make me feel really not confident.

Rachel (13:30):

Yeah. That phrase that you said, your mind hasn't caught up to the change. I mean, that's such a vivid... I totally understand that. My mind hasn't cut up to the change because it's changing so fast and we're kind of, we're still working within an old paradigm.

Doubrrava (13:49):

Yes. Yes. I remember for example, the winter, especially the winter I'm missing that it was a freezing lake and people play hockey. Because my country is famous from hockey and play good, but because everywhere was ice and right now they cannot play. And it is very sorry about the sport because the sport is getting low. Yeah. It is weird. I never expected that it's possible. And I know that my country is not like leader of, it is a small country. They really don't have, everybody believe that after the communism will be better. And right now people have said, because it is many serious problems, special like the environment and people doesn't... They don't have education proper... They, try to be like the Western country and to pushing too much to the, an economy, focus, not focus on ... too many developers buy the cheap land and cut forest. It is a big problem in Czech, in Poland because yeah, it is big problem. They even cut the preservation the natural preservation. Yeah.

Rachel (15:38):

It's fine. Don't worry about it. Oh...

Doubrrava (15:40):

I would like to put proper. It's too loud?

Rachel (15:45):

It's fine. That's good. So the next question I'd like to ask you is sort of how climate change affects your day to day. I mean, something that I think about a lot is you can't have any day, a full day living in the world that we live in without doing something that either directly or indirectly damages our worlds, both on an ecological and sort of, and a humane level in terms of like human rights. And so, we're like living out of alignment. There's this way that you have to live in dissonance. And so how does climate change affect your day to day life? And what are the behaviors and activities for you that kind of trigger feelings of conflict around how you're behaving and or activities that you participate in that you know aren't necessarily good for the planet?

Doubrrava (16:56):

Difficult to answer. I don't like people who are like [inaudible 00:17:08] or the, because I know that people, that we are a lot of people on the planet and everybody needs space. And even if I do everything, what I can, for example, separate the trash, the garbage...

Rachel (17:29):

Yeah recycling.

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Doubrrava (17:30):

...and I know that, because of the pandemic, for example, they didn't buy the garbage. And for, they didn't recycle when I do it, but the corporation didn't do it. And the corporation produce more than me. I try to teach my daughter to not waste food and water, not waste. That's only what we can, what I, in my opinion do is like the clean up the environment, thinking about animals like that, we go to feed animals. Why they, if they need it. And I am thinking about that some back of my mind, but I am not like, it's not my everyday agenda. I am so busy to think about the consequences. I think that I should do more for planets than I am doing.

Rachel (18:55):

And why, because my next question is, have you taken any political action around climate change? And it sounds like you haven't. And so my question is yeah, why not? What's the, I feel like I should do more, but I'm not. Where's that conflict coming from?

Doubrrava (19:15):

Because I think that the big group of people must do something together to have effects of some work. I was, for example, as a performer, I was doing performances about the planet topic, not only the warming, but about protect the trees. And I collaborated with my friend who is leader of ecological program, but I am more focused on human, on the people and change their minds through the, some art, because I am not able to physically do some something else. Yeah.

Rachel (20:23):

So you are doing work around...

Doubrrava (20:25):

Yes. Like in the past, before I had a daughter, I had more time to do some, what I wanted. And I was like the, from the Africa children, they sent to Czech Republic to, they have possibility to see our vegetation, our nature.

And I try to teach her because they explore the Africa nature so much. They don't have education about ecology and protect the sources. And I try to invest to the children and to the public, like we play the, we do the concert and I was like, participated on a, for concert festival, which help protect the mountain preservation like this locally, like local activity.

Rachel (21:32):

What kinds of impact do you think that work has?

Doubrrava (21:35):

What do you mean impact?

Rachel (21:38):

In what ways does that kind of work, like using art and education that you've been involved in. In what ways do you think that makes a difference? For our present and for our future?

Doubrrava (21:53):

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For example, because art is touching the emotions. And for example, I was reading a story, say the English, the theater place, the trees are giant standing. Yeah. It is very emotional and change my mind and view that I am more careful, more interesting about this topic and more like, find out what I can do.

My father was a lumberjack. He cut the trees. And I always feel sorry about the trees. I was watching the nice forest. And I, died the plenty of the cut wood around me. And it was very emotional and the performance was about it. And it was very like big publicity in the, and I was working as a journalist and I was writing articles about some wrong things about what's happened in my country. [inaudible 00:23:21] this, but as a global, I don't have the ambition to... I can change my world about me, but I think that maybe the younger people who are more, less shy, they are educate, more confident they, for example, as a greater, or some people with special, special talent can leading some global change.

Rachel (24:01):

Yeah. It's hard to understand how, as an individual, you can really step up and make a difference. And I feel like I'm constantly looking for tools or guidance to show me, what can I do that really feels meaningful? And I haven't really found that yet. It's part of why I'm doing this project. I'm like, what could we do? What's meaningful. What are you doing? I'm trying to find that, but I'm finding that most people who I'm talking to feel the same way as I do. So do you think that you will be affected differently because of climate change because of your race or class sexuality, nationality, or ability?

Doubrrava (24:48):

No, not sure, it's so difficult just to answer. Yes, because in my position I have the benefit to think about the climate and I have, but I believe that many people who are the worst situation, like for people from Africa, they have the neocolonialism, even from USA, that they build the electric, not to say, the public for electricity and 50% they have to put to the United States only I don't know how many percent is for whole Ghana for country. And they don't have the electricity. And it's affect many things. That the progress of civilization is completely different than the plan like the, effect is the worse. And I-

Rachel (25:50):

What do you mean, do you mean that like, civilization, the progress of humanity is...

Doubrrava (25:54):

I mean, technic technical civilization level of our quality of our life is higher, but the quality of air, of water is less.

Rachel (26:10):

Oh yeah.

Doubrrava (26:11):

Yeah. So it is big dissonance and the planet is going down and people are going to the dead little, like that end because they do more exploration, more developing even here in the United States. It was the park, state park, and they built something on this place in Hudson area there, which we going to the park. And right now it's like construction, and no tree passing and the building more building.

Rachel (26:50):

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How do you, in what ways does climate change impact the way you plan for your future?

Doubrrava (26:58):

I was thinking if I should have a children and because it's too many people, but I was thinking that good to have children, myself, to have give them the good ideas to maybe help the planet and the world. That's why I should sacrifice my, natural biological need to have children. But maybe I will have only one because there's no room. I feel it's too crowded. And that, I feel really sorry about this, the situation ,like global situation warming and what is together context to our problem.

Rachel (27:59):

In what ways does living... Well, so this is a question I'm trying to figure out how to ask the question, but I'll just ask you what I've got. Is it more important for you to live a comfortable life, or is it more important to respond to climate change and how are those goals related?

Doubrrava (28:24):

It is. Yes. I am thinking to, for example, to move to the farm and live some like rural area grow the plant myself, but it is connected with the economy that I am not ready. I don't have education because I grew up in the city, how to do the farm and how to survive, how to live. It is difficult because I tried, like, for example, to combine it, that I was growing plants in a fire escape because I have no room in apartments or small place to have some my own. But, I don't think that, I have a feeling that everything is dirty. Even if I go somewhere which should be clean. If I put the microscope, I see that it is already dirty.

Rachel (29:52):

You mean like polluted?

Doubrrava (29:53):

Yeah. Not only, but the ocean is, when I go hand fish and it is already, like mentally, I have a, the worst feeling that everything is some dirty, like when I shopping in whole food, I go to shopping from farm. I am watching if it's real, if it's really real is not chemically protected or it is... I have the war, like very bad feeling about what to feed her, if it's healthy.

Rachel (30:39):

It feels like there's toxins everywhere.

Doubrrava (30:41):

Yes it's the toxin. It is the word that I would like to say that it is make me, because my mother, when I was kid show me in a microscope, the dirty sea water. And it was very touched me and I have, yeah. I am thinking to escape the city bit I know it's not the solution, the problem, because I was living in the village too. And the people in the village, they are not as much protect the nature. Maybe people in the city are more nature friendly. Like in their mind.

Rachel (31:29):

I want to go back to this...

Doubrrava (31:32):

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It is very generalism, but I, when I was living in the city, I really don't have friends with other farmers and people there.

Rachel (31:39):

When you were living in the village?

Doubrrava (31:41):

Mm.

Rachel (31:42):

This feeling that there's kind of toxins everywhere and you can't escape it. What does that feel like? What's the emotional experience of that?

Doubrrava (31:56):

Like hopeless or...

Rachel (32:00):

Hopeless?

Doubrrava (32:01):

Mm. You are in that point that you really don't have too much choice. You have the world, not too much choice, the situation that you really don't...

Rachel (32:15):

You don't have any way of making choices that will be healthy for you.

Doubrrava (32:15):

Yes.

Rachel (32:19):

Because everything around us is polluted or toxic.

Doubrrava (32:23):

I just thinking about my childhood, even it was in communism, it was more healthy maybe than now, the food and the nature was more present in our lives, even it was the terrible system, which doesn't protect too much. But...

Rachel (32:50):

What does that feel like to think about?

Doubrrava (32:53):

Mm, yeah, I don't want to repeat what I was saying. I, have no able to describe in English more specific.

Rachel (33:07):

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Okay. Yeah. How do you contextualize this moment of change? And do you have a spiritual practice or a value or ethic space, belief system that helps you understand this moment or helps you move through this moment of change?

Doubrrava (33:29):

Yes. I believe that the positive thinking will help and I'm facing in the United States that people already try to be positive and friendly each other, which I appreciate. And I, for example, have a like simple pleasure, small simple pleasures, like put some seed and watching how they grow and give you something for your salad or eat. And it is very like nice, nice thing, little nice thing, which still works like the beauty of the nature.

Rachel (34:18):

I like that.

Doubrrava (34:19):

So see, I see some nice places, like the preservation state parks and try to be like, not explorer, like be very friendly for the nature to do picnic somewhere, to clean up everything and do it, be part of the nature and not leading the, not to feeling that we are something more because we have a brain update our ideas. I see that we are kind of animal and every disaster have some reason.

Rachel (35:17):

I just have a few more questions and I feel like this question kind of, you might have actually already answered it, but you talk about a lot of loss, a lot of environmental loss, loss of tradition, all of these sort of very elemental rhythms are, have been lost, or you are losing them because of changes in climate. How do you grieve for that loss? Are there ways that you grieve? Do you think about grief?

Doubrrava (35:54):

What you mean grief? Like it is like cemetery?

Rachel (36:01):

Yeah. Like sort of grieving a loss. How do you mourn a loss like this?

Doubrrava (36:08):

I try to not do something, try to not forgot the memory, of what I experience. To have, I was, for example, collecting the pictures of photographs, how they look like before the mountains, rivers, lakes.

Rachel (36:27):

Wow.

Doubrrava (36:28):

And how look now, something to somewhere is possible. For example, in Poland, it was a poor country in the communism. They have too many wars and poor. They don't have enough money to put the regulation of the river. And they still have a unique fish and butterflies. They have natural because it was a poor country. And the European Union is, I believe they are have many programs to protect something. For example, they pay people to not use the machine for cutting grass to use manual thing

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because it is not the, like the animals, doesn't like the noise and, that people return to the past and practice some old fashion think. And I remember before we didn't have the machine for everything, we do everything manually. And I remember as a kid that I really enjoy that everything doing manually and yeah. To have some knowledge, in the future maybe people will return to the past to have some people who still have knowledge.

Rachel (38:04):

So like keeping memory alive is a really important way of understanding loss.

Doubrrava (38:10):

The history. Yeah. The history.

Rachel (38:12):

What do you feel hopeful for?

Doubrrava (38:15):

Oh, that maybe the people in the future will be smarter, or do different way or have a better contact, with maybe [inaudible 00:38:32] they will maybe has to do some change in some regulations. Maybe some, discover some technology would help also possible. More careful. I try to good influence been present, but yeah, I am really seeing everywhere is like less the green, where was green is now the [inaudible 00:39:18]

I am not too much optimistic in myself like about this. Yeah.

Rachel (39:28):

Are there any other questions that I didn't ask you that...

Doubrrava (39:30):

No, no, no, no.

Rachel (39:31):

...you wish I had asked you?

Doubrrava (39:36):

I was reading your biography, like the folder, but I have no idea what you want to ask, because I would maybe prepare some dictionary, like how to say in English, it was, sorry about that.

Rachel (39:47):

No need, no need to prepare. This is amazing.

Doubrrava (39:49):

Yeah. I am curious about what other people say, because what I say, I am not curious. Okay.

Rachel (39:55):

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Well, I will send you the website I have, I don't have the new [crosstalk 00:40:02]. I don't have the new interviews yet on, but I have 47 previous interviews. I can take that. I'll turn this off.