

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Dwane (00:00):

Indies.

Rachel (00:00):

Say that again, because I did forget to press record.

Dwane (00:00):

My name is Dwane. I was born in Jamaica, West Indies. I'm 47 years old. I came to the US at 12 years old.

Rachel (00:16):

Maybe I'll actually put this ... Do you mind if I reposition this?

Dwane (00:16):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rachel (00:16):

Okay. That'll be better. Okay. Great.

Dwane (00:28):

Should I start over?

Rachel (00:29):

No.

Dwane (00:30):

Yeah. I came here when I was 12 years old to the US, to New York. I went to high school, college and everything else after that. Went to Pratt. Got a BFA at Pratt. I studied graphic design. I worked as an art director for 12 years. After working as an art director, I became a teacher or a soccer coach, because I believe in giving back to the community. My whole mission to come to America is to learn education and hopefully return to Jamaican to share that education and experience with the Jamaican youth, basically.

So I have a brand called RasStars. I believe that everybody's a star. I believe that everybody should shine their light to the community and guide for those who seek in a light within the community, basically. So my mission is to empower community, build community around sports and art as much as possible. I share my experiences and knowledge with the use of tomorrow here and abroad as much as possible. So my mission right now currently is to be a community leader or a community advocate, you might say. Presently my soul desires that, my heart desires that, my spirit desires that.

Rachel (01:43):

That's so cool. I love the idea of building community with art and sports. That's great.

Dwane (01:52):

Thank you.

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Rachel (01:53):

And how often do you go back to Jamaica?

Dwane (01:56):

I used to go back every year after summer breaks while teaching, but I haven't been back for the last two years. But I like to travel different places besides Jamaica, also Costa Rica, Puerto Rico I just went to also recently, and also the world. So my goal is to travel the world and share my cultural identity and experience to the world basically and bring an experience from the world to my world in that sense also.

Rachel (02:22):

And so you've lived in New York for like 40 years, and you've also had a lot of time spent in Jamaica. So actually, you must have a pretty broad perspective on changes that happened, that you might have noticed from New York and Jamaica.

Dwane (02:43):

For sure.

Rachel (02:44):

That's interesting. We'll come back to that. I'm very curious about that. And so we're here at [Red Shed 00:02:50], and how long have you been a member here?

Dwane (02:53):

I'd say two and a half years. I became a member because my ex-girlfriend was a member. So I actually became a member with her and I remained at the garden and she decided to leave the garden. So I decided to stay and become a part of the committee pretty much. So I've been here for two years. I think over the two years, the garden helped me have my own garden in my backyard. It's inspiring, pretty much. I'm also used to this atmosphere in Jamaica, having a backyard with trees, so I feel more comfortable in a surrounding like this, basically.

So I want to be a part of this garden for a long time and just actually play a part and get a green thumb and learn about plants and how to take care of the environment itself, and what an importance to have a community garden in the community also serves. You know what I mean? More than just a place to hang out, but more of a place to learn, share knowledge, communicate, and just build with people of common minds, like I said.

Rachel (03:48):

What kinds of things have you learned?

Dwane (03:50):

I've learned how to compost. I've learned how certain plants grow. I learned about plants itself in general, represents life to me basically how much you take care of it, how much it grows. My life is about growth right now. So like plant as a symbol for when I want to grow basically, what I need to grow. You know what I mean? What elements? So I've learned all these things from plants itself. I learned how to grow tomatoes, how to transfer plants, and how to learn how different plants, how can I say? Yeah, grow in certain seasons. You know what I mean? What comes back and what doesn't come back, the sense also.

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

So the last few years I look at plants as a way of learning about life in general, you know what I mean? Just how to survive certain hardships, weathers, difficulties in life, you know what I mean? What it takes for that plant to be dormant and come back up where there's a new light, basically. So it's more learning about composting and watering, but more about how individual plants flourish in certain shade or light, you might say. And that's a life learning experience also I can learn from.

Rachel (04:56):

Yeah, and I want to say you're building a metaphor, but actually in that we are part of nature, it's actually not metaphor at all.

Dwane (05:07):

For sure.

Rachel (05:09):

Our experience and the plants' experience isn't metaphor. They're likened.

Dwane (05:12):

Right. Indeed.

Rachel (05:14):

I am going to change my batteries, but this is a good time to pause because I'm going to ... So Dwane, I'm going to start by asking you the question that I ask everybody, which is, when you think about climate crisis or global warming, what do you think about and how do you feel?

Dwane (05:38):

So I've been very cognitive, for the last few years, about the changes in the world, and just looking at history of how the world's evolved. So me very sensitive, you might say. I think this planet is alive. I think it's a living being. I think that we are hurting it as much as possible and it's trying to let us know it's hurting in many ways. So I think that the climate crisis is a serious crisis, and I think for the next generation also, which I care about. You know what I mean? I think each generation have a duty to do, to prevent this crisis from happening before we all [inaudible 00:06:14] looking for some sci fi movie, trying to find planets to live on and stuff like that, to colonize next, whatever, basically. You know what I mean?.

So I'm really trying to prevent all that from seeing a toll the next 100 years, because to live in a beautiful green planet, you know what I mean? Maybe discover what's under the ocean more, and see what's really here, than rather going to outer space and stuff like that.

But I think again, the climate crisis is a corporation crisis. It's a political crisis. It's all these crises. I think it's a human crisis that we know the answer to. We know the real answer to, the solution. We just choose not to do it basically, because of, I don't know, greed or just this thing called paper, called money. I don't know. It's just sad to me how humankind has just not taken signs seriously or the fact that these changes are happening right in front of you. And people are advocating and advocating, and you're just still doing it. So it just makes sense that we behave like animals without knowledge or some sense of, I don't know, capability of stopping this.

So I'm very sensitive. It hurts me to see pollution in the ocean, to see deforestation to see all this stuff that's happening, pretty much. And it could be preventable a long time ago, I think, you know what

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

I mean? Even though with the warning right now, I think that we are still not really taking it seriously as one should. And I think individuals can't make that difference. I think the corporations, or whoever's actually fueling this stuff begins from there basically.

Rachel (07:52):

You said individuals can or cannot?

Dwane (07:54):

Cannot. So I realize that we have to recycle these bottles basically, but we don't produce these bottles. We just use them, yeah?

Rachel (08:00):

Right.

Dwane (08:02):

So the corporations are producing, so we are responsible to make sure we recycle. Therefore, I think we need a better solution for recycling plastic and paper, and just how we use this stuff. You know what I mean? I think the scientists design certain things, they should know how it affects the atmosphere, it affects us individually and how it's going to be decomposed and stuff like that. That's just like mass consumption of just plastic and just waste products. You know what I mean?

So I'm trying myself not to eat fish anymore because of the pollution in the water, you know what I mean? All these fishes are eating plastic and I'm very sensitive to that right now. You know what I mean?

Rachel (08:02):

Yeah.

Dwane (08:42):

So I'm seeing this garden also like, you could eat certain plants and live pretty much off the earth, you know? Which I should as a Rasta man, I should be living a very vegan life, an earthy life basically.

Rachel (08:54):

And do you?

Dwane (08:55):

I don't really. I'm a Presbyterian. I do like fish, and I do eat meat, so I get my protein and my iron, basically. But I'm on the path right now to really live a natural Rasta life, which says Ital is vital. Everything should be natural. From my hair to the food I eat should be natural, basically. Therefore, return to the simplest way of life, just live a natural life off the earth in that sense also.

Rachel (09:23):

And how do you feel?

Dwane (09:25):

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

I feel angry. Can I say that?

Rachel (09:25):

Yeah.

Dwane (09:28):

I feel angry and sad. I feel angry. I feel angry because the younger generations that haven't been taught the value of the community recycling and what we consume, basically. They've been targeted at advertisement consistently, from toys to whatever. You know what I mean? It's in you from the moment you get that toy. It's a plastic toy. So I'm angry on that part, like brainwashing kids. [inaudible 00:09:57] kids are really not knowing what the future might bring for them in a sense also. You know what I mean? That it's getting hotter every year certain places. Migration is a thing right now. You know what I mean? So it makes me sad at the same time because I think we have the solution. We know the solution. The scientists or whoever's telling us the solution, but we're still not listening as a global community, you might say, to fight the power, or to fight this crisis.

Rachel (10:27):

That makes you sad and it makes you angry.

Dwane (10:29):

Yeah. I mean, one should be, you know what I mean? I'm not happy about this. Again, if you're consciously aware of the earth, if you care about the earth, basically, I think it's the balance I feel. You know what I mean? It is a sad thing, but one should be angry and advocate and speak one's mind, basically. So I try, myself, if I get coffee, I'm bringing my bottle every day, my iron bottle and I'm adamant about that for the last few months. You know what I mean? Even the coffee guy, I missed one day, like, "Oh my god, where's your ..." I'm like, "Oh, I need to go and get it basically." Because they're reminding me that you're pretty much an advocate of recycling, so therefore you should get your [inaudible 00:11:06] coffee also.

Rachel (11:07):

So you mentioned that it's been in the past couple of years, that you've really tuned into the climate crisis. What happened in the last couple of years that made you start looking at this in a different way. And also what happened in the last few months that made you start bringing your own reusable coffee?

Dwane (11:28):

I think again, watching documentaries, just seeing how people are documenting from the seed to the land, whatever, basically, and just surrounding a community myself, that people are very consciously aware of the environment. So I think I extended my community also a few years ago to more conscious aware people, living a healthy life and living a certain lifestyle, which I like. That's the way it should be, pretty much. I think I was aware of it, but not really advocating. Because as a kid in Jamaica, you see bottles on the beaches and that didn't look cool. It didn't feel cool, but it didn't like, oh ... You know what I mean? [inaudible 00:12:08] didn't feel good to like be on a nice sandy beach, and people have bottles around and stuff like that. You know what I mean?

So I was aware, but again, it wasn't really consciously acknowledging that's bad for the reefs, you know? You're killing the reefs right now, because they need it to survive, and we need the reef to

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

work. You know what I mean? So I think for the last few years, just again being more aware, being more like this is real. You know what I mean? The tornadoes are getting worse. Everything's getting more stronger. You know what I mean? The water levels are rising. It's a crisis. So I'm a news person. I watch and read the news consistently, so I'm very much aware of global crisis. I want to be aware of that every day, just to be aware of what's going on in the world, and the crisis of the earth is major.

Rachel (12:57):

And it really sounds like what keyed you in is education, is learning in the past couple of years.

Dwane (13:05):

Right.

Rachel (13:07):

That makes me feel so angry because I feel like other people have talked about that. And I have noticed in the media in the past couple of years, the media's finally starting to pay attention to the climate crisis. And for whatever reason, I've been worried about global warming since I learned about it. I feel like I've had sort of eco dread and anxiety since I was in high school. And that was like in 2000, but nobody around me felt the same way.

And I feel just like if the media had been reporting on it earlier in a big way, people would have been aware of it in a way that they're aware of it now. Although at the same time, I mean, we're seeing increasing and accelerating warming at a rate that we hadn't seen five years ago, I guess. The atmosphere has really changed, figuratively and truly. So when first learn about global warming?

Dwane (14:17):

Al Gore.

Rachel (14:20):

You're also not the first person to say that.

Dwane (14:22):

If you remember back then, basically he was pushing this agenda. Again, as a kid, you have things going on in your life which is a crisis also. So it's hard to really have your crisis, worry about other crisis, basically. Your crisis might be more important than the global crisis, you might say basically. But I think for me, I think Al Gore was the message I heard pretty much back then, about the earth and environment. So you start being cognitively aware like, "Wow, something's really going on." You know what I mean?

I myself basically start being aware of what's really going on, and start paying attention basically to ... And again with education also. Educating oneself how to understand what's going on, and what the change is. [inaudible 00:15:11] to what's going on right now, basically. The debate of was it here before, pretty much, basically? So there's a constant science debate about this transformation of the earth. You know what I mean? But the human contribution is a factor, pretty much basically. It's a major factor since the industrial age, I believe, right? And we have seen the changes and we have to understand the changes. But again, with political and money, everything just fades away, pretty much basically.

So I don't want to live in a period that this beautiful earth is, again is unable to reset or stop or just whatever, pause. You know what I mean? And to heal itself again. You know what I mean? So I'm

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

hoping that will happen, you know? Again, with education hopefully and more news media. So again, the news is a great media. It's a great network of getting information out there. What network is going to produce that information about global crisis? You know what I mean? As I'm saying, for me, it just starts on a smaller level. So you educate and you let people be aware of what's really going on. That's how I feel.

Rachel (14:22):

So you hope-

Dwane (16:25):

I hope.

Rachel (16:26):

... that you'll be able to live through this moment where we pause and the earth has an opportunity to heal itself. Do you believe that world is possible?

Dwane (16:41):

Yeah, I believe so. I totally believe so. And it wouldn't take, I don't want a global crisis for us to come together and just finally, we could work together. So like a comic book hero, basically. You know what I mean? [inaudible 00:16:58] take some event to happen for us to like, "Okay, it's time to stop the BS." You know what I mean?

Rachel (16:41):

Right.

Dwane (17:05):

And get really serious and just do the right thing. So I think again, if progressive countries are setting the agenda for renewable energy and all this stuff, solar power, yeah, I think there is an opportunity to grow at the same time, you know?

Rachel (17:23):

What kinds of changes have you noticed, over the course of 40 years here locally in New York and also your experiences going back to Jamaica? What kinds of changes have you noticed in your local seasons and landscapes and weather patterns?

Dwane (17:42):

So I think Jamaica, the hurricanes are getting more intense. I believe. It's getting more hotter in the Caribbean also. Also, I noticed the reefs in my local place have just faded away because of the local tourism and stuff like that also, and pollution.

Rachel (18:03):

Tell me what the reefs used to be like and what they're like now.

Dwane (18:10):

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

I remember, there's more fishes at your feet. You could walk and see a beautiful array of a variety of fishes. So each time you go down, you see the water changes. From my experience, the same beach I've been going to as a kid, pretty much basically, has changed, again because of lack of awareness. Again, it might be the heat also, of the Caribbean being risen also at the same time.

And I think Jamaica also recently got more aware of like having people bring their own bags to grocery shops and not bringing plastic, you might say. So I'm not sure if they have a big recycling process in Jamaica to dispose of recycle. But I think right now in my recent visit, they're consciously aware right now of recycling, like bring your own bag or we charge you a certain amount of money basically. So I've been seeing a lot of people bringing their own bags right now and trying to eliminate the plastic as much as possible in Jamaica. So that's a good change, I think also,

I think after visiting Costa Rica, I wish Jamaica was like Costa Rica. It's all about environment. It's about the pura vida, and save every living thing and your land and don't sell it out, kind of thing. So I've seen the change in Jamaica in that sense. It's getting more aware environmentally as a country right now, and that's-

Rachel (19:31):

When did you start noticing specifically these changes at that beach and the reefs? When did you start noticing the lack of fish?

Dwane (19:42):

Yeah. There is fish, but I imagine it used to be a different, from 20 years ago, 30 years ago. You know what I'm saying? The water has receded, I think. It's more shallow certain places. It's still beautiful, but more shallow. You can walk out a certain distance which you couldn't have walked out a long time ago basically.

So again, I can't really say how the changes I've seen directly, because I'm not really paying attention. But I've definitely seen that area of my beach landscape change, as far as the water, what I used to imagine, going to the reef, swimming and seeing the reefs and fishes. That's all faded away.

Rachel (20:24):

What does it feel like to experience that change? I'm going to try to ask this question. How does it shift the way you feel in your body or your body in that space, the difference between what you see now and the memory of what it used to be?

Dwane (20:50):

I don't know. I guess it's still beautiful, but maybe a sense of emptiness. If you feel connected to the earth, you knew that something was taken from you, that part of your childhood experience, of seeing what you imagine. But again with changes of time, certain things do get eliminated. Certain things do flourish, depending on where you are at to see that change basically. You know what I mean? So I think where I was at, I've seen things diminish in that area of the sea but it's still beautiful at the same time. But diminished in the sense that it doesn't have the same experience as a child because the certain elements were not there, in that sense. Because if you're connected to something is special like that, then something was taken from you. I felt it was taken from me. So therefore, that's a part of me in a sense. And missing that part of me, it's like even if it's a small missing puzzle but it's still a missing piece, [inaudible 00:21:40].

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Rachel (21:39):

Someone else mentioned the word emptiness in response to that question. It's a word that I hadn't thought about before. I think it's so interesting. A feeling of emptiness, when things, as you say, diminish or were taken away, it makes a lot of sense that there's sort of a hole where something used to be.

Dwane (22:05):

Yeah.

Rachel (22:07):

And what about in New York where you've lived for 40 years? Tell me about ...

Dwane (22:14):

The changes?

Rachel (22:15):

Yeah.

Dwane (22:15):

What kind of changes? There's so much changes, in many ways.

Rachel (22:15):

I know.

Dwane (22:20):

Changes, I think on a demographic scale. I think again, it's been good. I think the changes for me was coming to New York for the first time, thinking that New York was like a Sesame Street. It was not a Sesame street. It was more surreal. It was a culture experience. So changing from the 80s, 90s, got better and better, I think for me also. I think for the community at the same time. But also, there's a [inaudible 00:22:55] to the changes happening with the community, that sense of new migration, new people, [inaudible 00:23:02]. But again also, I just seen it as New York. It's like the Dutch were here, then the Irish and new different people come in that take over. So there's mixed opinions on that topic of what changes I see demographically, economically also.

Changes, I see again community wise, it's been beautiful. I love Brooklyn. I lived in Scandinavia for a year. I was trying to do that through my ex-wife. I realized I need sunshine more than I need cold weather, you know? So I returned to New York, because again LA or ... Nothing beats New York, I think. I think the energy and the vibe is here. I think the art and my family, my son is here also. So it's like, my heart is here for certain reasons, you know? But the changes have been positive from my outlook, from where I grew up in Brooklyn, you know? Yeah, it's been a positive change in many ways.

Rachel (24:05):

That's awesome. And have you noticed any changes in the weather or the seasons?

Dwane (24:14):

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

That's a good question. When I first experienced my winter storm in November, coming from Jamaica, it was intense.

Rachel (24:22):

Oh my God. I bet.

Dwane (24:23):

So intense.

Rachel (24:24):

Was that the first time you had seen snow?

Dwane (24:26):

Yeah. '86. Never forget. It was below zero. I'm like, "Oh my god, below zero in my first couple of months here." Noticeably, the changes over the years, it's been [inaudible 00:24:41]. Some winters don't feel like winter, some winters feel like spring almost basically, over time. I'm realizing that it just gets warmer in New York at a certain point. Doesn't feel like a cold '86, below zero weather when I came here. I don't get that intensity also. The warmness, I can't say if it's been this warm in New York since. I've been here 40 years or so, or have not but definitely I think I notice the winter season has changed. It's gotten less cold in New York City.

Rachel (25:21):

When have you noticed that? Can you remember?

Dwane (25:25):

That's a good question. I don't know, after 9/11. I don't know. After around 10 years ago, around 10, 12 years ago.

Rachel (25:25):

And what does that feel like?

Dwane (25:43):

It feels weird, because I'm trying to avoid winter as much as possible. It feels weird. Winter should be winter. Winter should be cold, snowy, whatever, basically. It shouldn't have 80 something degree in February, or something like that. It's kind of strange, which is okay but still, you don't want it to be normal the next couple of years. It's 80 degrees in December in New York. That's kind of fucking strange, you know?

Rachel (25:43):

Right.

Dwane (26:10):

It's snowing in Texas. I'm like that's strange. You don't hear of snow in Texas, and people are wearing winter coats in Florida. So there's a shift in a global, I guess the world's confused-

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Rachel (26:25):

Confused, yeah. Yeah. Talk to me about that word weird. What does it mean to feel weird, and how does that shift the way you might experience time or again your sense of your body in the landscape?

Dwane (26:46):

Yeah. Again, if you're connected to the earth, which we are connected to the earth, you will feel that shift. Yeah? Either psychologically or metaphysically, basically. Again, if you're connected or feel spiritually connected to the earth, you will feel that change and notice that change as much as possible. So your behavior might change, personality might change without you knowing pretty much basically, because you're affected by this change also. Your health might be changing at the same time, through these changes that we breathe. So again, it's many factors, what that change is. Is it internal or spiritual for me personally? How does it affect me in many ways?

Rachel (27:25):

Yeah. How has it affected you personally?

Dwane (27:29):

In a humble way, I think. And again, I don't want to have anger in my soul. I try to understand the process. You know what I mean? And learn from the process as much as possible, this change that we are going through and be aware of it. But just to find myself being angry all the time, like why are these people doing this? This is crazy. You know what I mean? It's not really worth my soul, because I'm just trying to live in the moment and enjoy the beauty around me right now, and not to be angry about the issues. But again, be self aware and hope for the best. You know what I mean? Send that good energy out there that hopefully mankind will remember the land is ours and the earth is the [inaudible 00:28:19] basically.

Rachel (28:20):

But there is a tension, I feel like I hear from you, around what you see around you, how it makes you feel and how you want to be feeling and how you want to be moving through your life.

Dwane (28:34):

Yeah. I really do. I wish not to be in New York the next few years. I want to be in the country, and away from the grittiness basically.

Rachel (28:45):

Why?

Dwane (28:46):

I think I'm getting over sensitized right now by so much stimulation, as an artist. I think at that point, I need a sense of de-stimulation of noise and smell and everything else. I'd rather just hear birds singing and water around me, basically, to find that self again, that true self [inaudible 00:29:04]. You know what I mean? Because it's difficult, living in the concrete jungle. You really can't be the human being who you really want to be basically, because you have duties and responsibilities and stuff like that. So I'm searching for that true life, where I could be one with nature and live on the earth and live on the

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

land and stuff like that. You know what I mean? At some point in my life, I'd like to do that. And I'm working hard towards that right now, pretty much.

So again, you might feel an anger in me again. I wish I could be an advocate and speak. To be honest with you, I was in Jersey, and as I came out the train station, I saw a young man and a girl had a box, just throw the box in the street. I had to just like step over and like, "Please don't do that. There's a garbage can right there." You know what I mean? It hurts me when I see kids just blatantly throw stuff in the street without the knowledge of look around you, man. This is your community, man. You know what I mean? People want to enjoy just like you, you know what I mean?

So I had to approach the young man very respectfully like, "Sir, please. You know what I mean? It would be appreciated if you picked that up." And he did it also. So I'm an advocate that way. I get angry seeing people doing their actions, to contribute more, you know what I mean? And I try to find a solution in that sense also. So I think just the small things you could do to make it feel good, look good, is a step in a sense also, to the bigger picture, in a sense.

Rachel (30:34):

How did that person respond to you?

Dwane (30:34):

Positively.

Rachel (30:34):

Really?

Dwane (30:38):

Yeah.

Rachel (30:38):

That's great.

Dwane (30:39):

I just used a teacher technique. You know what I mean? I think I showed the young man respect. I called him sir. You know what I mean? Good afternoon, I addressed him. You know what I mean? And then being like, "It would be nice." So I think the energy I give to people is the energy I'm going to receive, you know? It's the laws of attraction, you might say. Even though I feel angry seeing him doing that, I was consciously aware that it's good to be respectful and let him see the reason why it's important to not pollute the street that you walk on basically. I'm always a teacher. I try to be a teacher or lead by example as much as possible in my lifestyle. So I'm very instinctive. I'm very, I don't know. Yeah, that's the word I'm looking for. But yeah, I'm very impulsive when it comes to people not doing the right thing.

Rachel (31:34):

Daily life, it's really, really hard to live a full day without consuming or engaging in activity or doing something that in some way is damaging to the environment. So what are the activities that you engage in, that you notice more than others that feel hurtful towards the planet? How do you try to mitigate those behaviors? And also then what do you feel like the impact is?

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Dwane (32:11):

So I think traveling is my thing also because traveling affects the earth, right?

Rachel (32:11):

Yeah.

Dwane (32:15):

So I try to travel maybe once a year, if possible, you know what I mean? And try to be [inaudible 00:32:23]. So I'm aware of how the planes affect the earth also, at the same time. So I limit that. I don't have a car, so I bike pretty much everywhere. I have my license. I never drove in New York for the last 20 years, for certain reasons. I take the bus because it's electronic right now, certain things. I'm not sure if I'm contributing that much. Maybe the meat I eat, I don't know, makes a small contribution. I'm thinking. But I don't use the mass service. I don't have a car. I don't consume all this, so I'm aware of that pretty much, in a sense. I bring my own coffee cup, my own bags and stuff like that. That's what I do.

Rachel (33:14):

You kind of talked about this already, but I'll ask you again, what's the relationship between our individual behaviors and global change?

Dwane (33:28):

Our individual behaviors. So I think each behavior individually, I think if you're trying to make a change, you will do the best as possible to play your part and to advocate for that part also. Yeah? I think we're just a small minute solution to this big problem. You know what I mean? It may be out of hand right now, but not yet, you might say. So the individual change triggers one to be more consciously aware of one's self, one's mind, one's living environment at the same time also.

And again, certain people's crisis, that really can't take them out of that. You know what I mean? But from my personal experience, my behavior, basically, I'm more aware of just what's going on. You know what I mean? Makes my behavior more conscious of how I live my life. You know what I mean? What I eat, what I wear, everything pretty much is more conscious awareness and to share that conscious awareness with individuals who are not conscious about the fact that this earth is dying, basically. I hope I gave you the right answer.

Rachel (33:28):

Huh?

Dwane (34:48):

I hope I gave the right answer.

Rachel (34:49):

There's no right answer and no wrong answer. I'm frankly curious because I'm asking myself that question, like every day.

Dwane (34:53):

I understand.

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Rachel (34:54):

I'm seeking the answers through these interviews.

Dwane (34:57):

Totally understand.

Rachel (35:00):

Have you ever engaged in any political action around the issue of climate crisis?

Dwane (35:09):

I have not, but I made donations, pretty much. I have not. I think I've taught lessons around that to kids basically. You know what I mean? About plastic and just basic science environment, like equipment we use, you know what I mean? The reason why I use these old equipment because I want to use old plastics again. So they have to be completely beat up for me to reuse something. So I taught them the reasons behind my choices of tools to use for PE in a sense also.

But as an advocate, I've never seen myself being at a protest or running a campaign, basically. I recently became an advocate. I'm a very shy person also. So it's very hard for me to be that person to ... But lately, I'm trying to be more an advocate for self in my art, and I just did my first political volunteer for a local politician giving out fliers. So that made me step out the box and trying to advocate for more people to vote more, which is important.

Rachel (36:17):

What did that feel like to go out and-

Dwane (36:19):

That felt great. Yeah. That felt great to step out and promote someone that's trying to make a change, in a sense to be a part of some type of team effort. You know what I mean? To push an agenda that I believe in also and I support. And it gave me confidence, again to be out in the public and like, "Hey, it's all right. You don't want to take my flier, it's okay." I just smile and have a beautiful day. That's not going to affect me. You know what I mean? So I get that mask on to really be out and to be like, "Yeah, I'm going to be out, because I believe in this person." So in that sense, it is a good lesson for me also. So I'm trying to do that more for my myself to be more out there. Because I'm a very shy individual. I stick to myself but I want to be more social in that sense. Very social. But again, it's a long story. Sorry.

Rachel (37:12):

Do you think after this experience you might go out and take more of political action around global warming?

Dwane (37:21):

Yeah.

Rachel (37:22):

I'm curious. I mean, everybody has different responses or many people have the same response around this question of political action, its efficacy, what it can or can't do. And I think it sort of lies in people's

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

fundamental beliefs about their own feeling of powerlessness or powerfulness around engaging in political action. Tell me about that for yourself. What do you think is the efficacy of engaging in political action around this issue?

Dwane (38:03):

I think it's important. There's a couple of young advocates I see from like Gretchen to these other advocates that's actually pushing the agenda globally. For me, it's inspiring. I think it's very inspiring to see the younger generation really making a voice right now for themselves. To take it back, I remember doing a lesson on how to make protest posters with kids, by using recyclable cardboard papers. And that's one of the best lessons I ever taught because the kids were so engaged in it. A lot of kids came over just really voicing their opinion about animal rights, environmental rights, you know what I mean? Human rights, you know?

So again, that was like empowerment to see that yeah, kids have a knowledge of what's going on, and to do that in a protest way or just how to do that verbally or visually was really good to see pretty much. So I could be a visual protestor, you know what I mean? I don't have to be vocal in a sense, so I could do it in many different ways. So the word protestor or advocate could be done in many mediums, I think also. I think I might use my art to advocate more this crisis.

Rachel (39:24):

Yeah. That there's multiple ways to get in and engage politically.

Dwane (39:28):

Indeed, I think so. For me again, I'm a neutral person. Political stuff has always come to some type of, I don't know, corruption. [inaudible 00:39:40] this organization, I'm not sure agenda, there's a hidden agenda, just on certain political things. And I'm a hippie also, you know? So these things, you find politics is always like, "All right. I believe but there's something hidden that you're not telling me. What is it you're not really telling me?" If you were to say, "You know what? We believe in the Indians. We're going to be like the Indians. We're going to fight for this land. We're going to protect this land basically, because the land is a part of us." You know what I mean? Then I put on my war hat, I'm like, "Okay, let's do it." You know what I mean? I'll be like, "okay, this is an advocacy. This is a group that's actually doing this stuff and they believe in this stuff."

So the political part of it, I'm hesitant because again, there's so much layers underneath that stuff basically. You know what I mean? That goes with it. But yeah, if I'm in a situation that I need to be out there, yes. I would use my political ways of advocating for the world. You know what I mean? Which is our right. This is a human right, to [inaudible 00:40:41].

Rachel (40:41):

Do you feel like you personally will experience the climate crisis differently because of various intersecting identities, like race, nationality, sexuality, gender, ability, religion?

Dwane (41:01):

Would it affect me?

Rachel (41:02):

Yeah.

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Dwane (41:02):

Personally?

Rachel (41:02):

Differently.

Dwane (41:04):

Differently, yeah. I think. Again, we're all humans. I think certain crisis affect certain people differently also. I don't know, living in America, I feel that certain things affect certain people differently also, which is weird, because I'm coming from a country like you're Jamaican even though you're less a different color, but you're Jamaican pretty much. I don't see you like less or above pretty much basically. You know?

So I think under the political, it will affect me personally in a sense also, but how much I am willing to let that affect me is up to me. You know what I mean? I think it's for me be more aware of do I want to affect me? Do I want to make this a part of me? Whatever, basically. Do I want to wait for the change to affect me or do I just make that change for myself in a sense? You know what I mean?

Rachel (41:04):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dwane (42:00):

So that's the way I feel. I think certain things do affect us, certain people, you might say in different ways, you know what I mean? But sometimes, it'll be by choice. Do I want it to really affect me? You know what I mean?

Rachel (42:00):

Yeah.

Dwane (42:12):

Or do I want to be a part of the solution basically? You know what I mean? To let that effect be more broader, in a sense. Does that make sense?

Rachel (42:19):

Yeah. Does climate crisis, thinking about it, affect how you plan for your future?

Dwane (42:28):

Yeah, totally. That's what I'm saying, I would like to live in a hut in the hills as much as possible, and do my part away from ... Not totally away, like an old grandpa, but to live a peaceful life. I think at some point, you know what I mean?

Rachel (42:49):

How does climate change affect that desire?

Dwane (42:52):

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

That's desire?

Rachel (42:54):

Or that aspiration? Yeah.

Dwane (42:59):

Just to find that, to hold onto a place you still think of as vital, that's still natural, that feels natural, that doesn't feel out of sync or feels like it's abnormal because I'm living in an urban environment, you might say basically. You know what I mean? So I think again for me personally, my body and spirit like to be in this type of atmosphere. So I imagine it being without the sensory of a siren going off or a firecracker at 2:00 in the morning or whatever, basically. You know what I mean?. So yeah, it is that part of like the oasis you might say, that you want to like keep going to, either in your mind, because it is a mind thing also, that you want to build this oasis, this beautiful earth in your mind first, for you to take you to where you want to go. [inaudible 00:43:52]. That's the way I see it.

Rachel (43:58):

What are the tools that you think we need to cultivate, the emotional tools, psychological tools, spiritual tools that we need to cultivate in order to move into our future? And something actually that I hear you talking about in this conversation is this way that we're living out of alignment with the world that we're really living in. And it's a question that I've been asking a lot. Us, where we live right now, in so many ways, we're able to kind of forget about climate change. You know, we've been experiencing this super hot weather, but in general, it's not in our faces. And we can act as if we're living in a world that we no longer live in.

We haven't yet folded in the reality of change, into the way that we experience day to day life. But we do live in a very different world than we pretend like we're living in. And so something that I've been curious about is what are the tools we need to cultivate in order to help bring us into the real world that we actually live in, and then how do those tools help us prepare for our future in this real world?

Dwane (45:27):

Let me think about that real quick.

Rachel (45:34):

And I'll also just say for the record that you took a very sort of deep and calming breath in, which also made me feel like that was part of the answer.

Dwane (45:45):

Yeah. I think it's the breathing, it's like take a moment to breathe in that inspiration, what you want, and exhale that expectation that you see basically, you know what I mean? So I think the tools, I think for me that will work, I don't know what the right tools are. So again, I think the body is an earth. If you treat the body like a living earth, then everything is connected like the earth itself. You know what I mean? The waters in our body is the earth. It's the same. I think if you can treat your body first, like the earth, like you nurture it, you meditate, you get the self strength, the self spiritually. You know what I mean?

Again, I'm a spiritual person. I'm saying if the spirit's not strong, you can't move forward to what you're trying to perceive in life, or what that energy you're trying to perceive in life basically. So I think

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

the tools you need is just to have, I don't know, spiritual strength, belief system, that we believe humankind can make a change. I think we can somewhat connect to human being's psyche and we project that consistently, then hopefully we'll be on the same energy wavelength to be like, "Oh, we could do that together, pretty much basically." Without saying a word.

I think the tools also we need is to advocate more, more voice, more younger voices to, "Hey, this is our earth also pretty much basically." So I think we need to give the tools to the different generation. You know what I mean? What we can't have right now, what we can't provide for them basically. So we need to provide a future, if that makes sense. So I'm not sure what the right tools are. I think again for me, it's just the tools of advocacy, spiritual strength, self awareness, you know what I mean? And just being totally open, and share your thoughts and feelings to the public, to bring about some type of change or tools that we need. Again, there are many people right now building the tools. We just need a bigger industry to make more tools for us, in that sense, if that makes sense. So I think we're kind of getting there. We just need a rapid revolution for change for the environment.

Rachel (48:18):

And rapid being the operative word.

Dwane (48:20):

Yeah. Seriously.

Rachel (48:22):

You have a son.

Dwane (48:22):

I have a son.

Rachel (48:24):

How old is he?

Dwane (48:24):

22.

Rachel (48:29):

And do you worry for his future in the context of this conversation?

Dwane (48:32):

I worry for his future on many different levels. So the environment, yes, for sure. You know what I mean? Yes, I do worry about him. At 22, I think he's on the right path and becoming a young man. You know what I mean? His self awareness should be developed on his own. You know what I mean? I'm wanting right now to be a guider, pretty much, and a protector. So the reason why I'm still in New York is because of him. Once I think he's really a man, his mental is matured and he's making the right decisions like he has been before, then I think I could make a move and do something else right now, basically. But my reason for being here is to make sure he's okay. So I worry about his future. He's going to be a father soon, I hope basically, you know what I mean? So the generation of life needs to still live. You know what I mean?

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Rachel (49:24):

So you do believe that life should continue moving forward.

Dwane (49:28):

But life has to continue to move forward. There is no time on life. I think-

Rachel (49:33):

There's so many people right now who are saying that they don't think they want to have a kid because they can't envision a future that will be livable for a child.

Dwane (49:47):

Watching too much movies, I think. I think you can have a child to live, because the child can make a difference. That one child [inaudible 00:49:57] can make a big difference, basically. You know what I mean?

Rachel (49:59):

Yeah.

Dwane (50:00):

That one child, maybe there's a reason for him to be born pretty much. You know what I mean? So each his own. I can't say whatever, but I think for me as an individual, I didn't know myself until I became a father. But I know my empowerment of like, "Oh my god, I'm sensitive to certain things," and my hyper alertness became more as a father, you might say. My sense of being became more aware as a father in a sense. Life became more as a father, because that's you yourself you're looking at, your reflection of you, any child you produce in this world. So again, a child can live in this world.

Rachel (50:40):

Even if it's a world diminished, or even if we worry that increasing change will bring violence and harsh conditions?

Dwane (50:54):

But it could also bring unity at the same time also. Yeah? It could also bring the opposite that I think-

Rachel (50:58):

You really have a deep hope for the future of this planet, don't you?

Dwane (51:02):

One should. One shouldn't give up hope in self and on this earth. Once you have an open mind, a growth set mindset, I think, if possible, then there is hope for this world. I think there is hope for humankind to work together to save this planet. You know what I mean? I hope it doesn't take something dramatic, like some alien invasion to happen, basically. You know what I mean? But one should hope for the better of this world and for the human kind. I think it makes me feel more happy that way, that there is hope. I rather think that there is no hope.

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

I'm thinking like the Terminator is coming next week, robots are going to take over this world or the apes or something like that. You know what I mean? No. I think the humankind is going to still evolve and still try to make a change. Either we're living in the ocean or something basically, but I think life is forever. Life constantly goes on. It's not us to say it's going to end. We have no power over that at all, basically. I think we could see the changes of what could happen, but hope for the best also that it could still be a beautiful oasis. That grass can be growing in desert lands, and stuff can be balanced in a sense, once there's a collective balance of human love or human hope, you might say. I don't want to forget about that, give up that hope. Sorry. I have to keep believing that whole mindset. It makes me spiritually feel better that way. Not to say, "I'm not going to have more kids because this world is blah, blah, blah."

Rachel (52:50):

[inaudible 00:52:50]. Yeah. That's beautiful. I love hearing that. Do you have energy for a couple more questions?

Dwane (53:00):

Sure. Let's see. Yeah. Getting some iced coffee soon, [crosstalk 00:53:06]. We're good.

Rachel (53:11):

I've got, I don't know, maybe two more questions for you. How do you contextualize this moment? In the context of, I guess I'm asking how did we get here and how do you define here? Where are we right now in history? And how did we get here?

Dwane (53:34):

Okay. We are here because of the knowledge we have, this beautiful mind that lets us invent and explore and do certain things. Yeah? We are here at this present moment because of our mind, of just the human mind advancing itself, basically, problem solving. And it's going to problem solve this situation also. We made the problem, we have to find a solution. That's how we got here. We got here because we made the problem. We got here because we've been trying to find a solution to that problem, in a sense also. Presently right now, in a sense. Everything doesn't happen naturally. It happens because we are humans, we're intelligent, and we do things to enhance technology or whatever, and forget about living like Indians and hut people and stuff like that basically. You know what I mean?

So I think the more we evolve, we evolve with the change of destruction and the change also of maybe peace at the same time, if that makes sense. I try to see both sides of the coin. You know what I mean? Because we didn't just get here because the earth is whatever. Basically we get here because of the contribution pretty much. Yeah? I think we are going to get to the next step by finding solution to that problem that we did, pretty much. Again, having hope for the future. Presently right now we are here, glad to be here in this present moment. Glad to be breathing. Glad to be in this garden. I could be in different location, not able to find water or something like that.

So I'm thankful for this present moment here and this moment right now, pretty much basically. And that's how I live my life, to give thanks for the present. You know what I mean? And hope there will be a better future and hope that the human kind could like ... let's have a community garden, every damn block, you know what I mean? On top of the roof. Let's build it, and let's do it pretty much, basically, instead of skyscrapers, and see how we could start from there, from a community and work our way outwards pretty much. You know what I mean?

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

So it's just like planting seeds. You just plant a seed everywhere you go, and hopefully that seed will grow. Maybe it doesn't become a weed, but it becomes something that's going to nourish the community or nourish or give life or make a contribution in that sense.

Rachel (56:08):

I hope you're right.

Dwane (56:08):

I hope so too.

Rachel (56:16):

Dwane, are there any questions I didn't ask you that you expected that I would ask you, or that you'd like me to ask you?

Dwane (56:22):

Not at all. It was good to be unexpected. I didn't want to premeditate. That's why I didn't do any research on your background. I just wanted to be present-

Rachel (56:30):

Yeah, no reason to.

Dwane (56:33):

Just be present and see what comes out of it.

Rachel (56:35):

Thank you so much.

Dwane (56:39):

Thank you also.

Rachel (56:39):

This was an awesome conversation.

Dwane (56:39):

Thank you.

Rachel (56:39):

I'm really glad we met to talk about this-

Dwane (56:42):

I appreciate that.

Rachel (56:42):

Dwane, Red Shed Community Garden, East Williamsburg, Brooklyn
July 16, 2021

Thank you.

Dwane (56:42):

You're welcome.

Rachel (56:44):

Any final thoughts or words before we-

Dwane (56:47):

I just wish you all the best-

Rachel (56:48):

Thanks.

Dwane (56:48):

... in your journey and what you're doing. I think you're doing positive things also. I think it's good to have a conversation like this and to hear a collective conversation and share that collective conversation to the world, and see how the world responds to that also. So I wish you all the best.

Rachel (57:05):

Thanks.

Dwane (57:06):

I hope you have success in what you're doing.

Rachel (57:06):

You too.

Dwane (57:11):

And blessings always. That's about it. Namaste.

Rachel (57:15):

Namaste. Yeah, it's interesting. I love that you said collective conversation. I can take your microphone. It's been fascinating to do these interviews because-