



A Future Forged in Radical Inclusion

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Growing up as a science geek, Jonah didn't have many friends. He often felt alone and isolated -- like he was different. And he struggled with accepting those he felt were "different" too. Thankfully, when he was 15, he went to Camp Rising Sun in New York, an international gathering of youth leaders who practiced the tenets of Radical Inclusion.

At Camp Rising Sun, each summer, 60 young men and 60 young women practice leadership skills in a supportive community of peers and counselors. There Jonah found himself mingling with youth from more than 35 different countries, celebrating their different cultures and ways--and practicing Radical Inclusion. He became fascinated by the wonderful diversity in all things - food, culture, language, you name it. "On Saturday nights, we'd sing a song called 'Everybody Loves Saturday Night'. Those who spoke a language others didn't speak would sing the chorus in their mother tongue." One by one, the chorus was belted out in French, German, Spanish, Yiddish, and a variety of African dialects--a rich diversity of accents, indigenous languages, in voices from around the world. Everyone was encouraged to repeat the words back in their same language, which created an exciting exchange of cultures. "In that moment, I really felt included," says Jonah. "I began to see the beauty in people who are different. But mainly, I lost my fear, and that allowed for real human connection."

When Jonah got back to high school, he made it a point to learn everyone's first and last name - particularly those students he thought might be feeling ostracized, much in the way he had felt before his camp experience. It was his first foray into a personal type of activism, in the tried-and-true practice of Radical Inclusion. Now, twenty years later, he's still stewarding support for global youth leaders.

In 2000 Jonah founded the Global Youth Action Network (GYAN) to connect, support, and empower youth globally. GYAN was formed with multiple aims in mind: to increase youth participation in decision making; to facilitate international collaboration of youth organizations; and to create a structure of support from established leaders in social entrepreneurship. With the support he has gotten from corporations, institutions, and governments, Jonah has helped to amplify the voice of youth in the policy and decision-making processes in more than 180 countries around the world. In 2001 GYAN merged with TakingITGlobal, a network of several thousand youth NGOs whose online platform is visited by thousands of people every day.

In 2011 Jonah went on to found NEXUS, a global network of influential philanthropists and social entrepreneurs who are tackling a wide array of social causes and issues, including disaster relief and humanitarian aid, especially in the regions most affected by climate change.

For example, in August 2019, Hurricane Dorian tore through the Grand Bahamas. A Category 5 hurricane with winds reaching 185 mph, Dorian caused nearly \$3.5 billion in damage to this island nation. Nearly 70,000 people were left homeless in its wake, with nowhere to go, and local transportation and food supplies were devastated. NEXUS quickly responded to Grand Bahama Port Authority's Director Rupert Hayward's call for assistance, they reached out to their network of philanthropists to provide a lifeline of supplies. In the end, NEXUS members donated 19 planes, more than 50 boats, and nearly \$2 Million of aid for relief efforts.

At the forefront of NEXUS's climate-related work is their support for innovation in the environmental and renewable energy spaces. NEXUS member Sam Teicher's organization Coral Vita is helping to rebuild damaged and vulnerable

coral reefs around the world. With 30 percent of the world's coral reefs already gone, and 75 percent of what remains forecast to be lost by 2050, organizations like Coral Vita are needed now more than ever. Coral reefs are essential for maintaining the ocean's ecosystem. They provide a home for an astonishing 25 percent of the biodiversity we see in marine life. They act as protective barriers for mainland areas, by absorbing wave shocks. And when they are intact, they can serve as lucrative destinations for ecotourism.

Using an innovative technique called micro-fragmenting, scientists at Coral Vita have been able to create growth in coral restoration "farms" in a span of 6-12 months, a process that would normally take 25-30 years in the ocean. While this has incredible implications for reef recovery, it will still be an uphill battle. As the farms grow, the scientists invite people to visit them, so they have an opportunity to teach the next generation of scientists and conservationists about the importance of innovation and social entrepreneurship.

Through the NEXUS Impact Accelerator program, Jonah is striving to get resources directly to those social entrepreneurs who are working on the most critical global environmental challenges. An inaugural fellow in this program, Blayne Ross, is CEO of Shorelock, a company working to protect vulnerable coastlines around the world. Shorelock helps sandy beaches, shorelines, and coastlines resist erosion by wave action, winds, storms, and other natural phenomena. By applying a powdered mix of a sustainable bonding agent to sand, it creates a microlayer of water that helps waves run off the shore without bringing the sand along with them. This technology has been proven to be 100 percent environmentally sound, and has even helped restore the breeding habitats for certain rare species like sea turtles. Shorelock works with the Small Islands Resiliency Program in the Bahamas to protect the coastal lands of indigenous communities, while ensuring that the vital islands' infrastructures, which have been severely impacted by climate change, remain intact.

Galvanizing support for innovation in combating plastics pollution is also critical for Jonah. NEXUS's The SUPR Initiative launched by NEXUS in 2020 in partnership with Oceanic Global and Accenture works with professional sports teams to reduce and eliminate single use plastics in stadiums. Along with NEXUS community-led summits like the Ocean SOS Tech Summit in 2018, Jonah has organized the resources and knowledge to think creatively about ways to solve plastic pollution in oceans.

He is also helping to raise the visibility of social entrepreneurs in the political and financial arenas. In 2018, he founded the Healthy Democracy Coalition (HDC) to help mend the political divide in the United States, by bringing Republicans and Democrats donors together to address the societal problems that have been ignored, and exacerbated, as a result of the increasing divisiveness. Jonah believes that by creating communities to seek solutions together to problem issues like plastics pollution, environmental damage, or even the need for a green, global currency, it will bring people closer, while accelerating the speed with which we can solve these problems.

Jonah strongly believes that getting youth involved in decision making along with adults offers a variety of benefits, especially at a time when people are so divided. One reason why young people are such a key leverage point for any social change strategy, he says, is because they can see the problems that aren't being addressed. They can see problem solvers who've gone stagnant, and become out of touch. Investing in young people becomes a positive investment in the future. "Until we fix the ways we are managing the global commons, there will continue to be problems in the future," Jonah says. "Until we can overcome the accountability gap of our current global governance system, these problems will only get worse, not better. We *must* engage with the next generation of youth leaders, to look with fresh eyes at these persistent problems. To help us find a solution, and lead us out."

Jonah's message to youth is simple. Celebrate inclusivity and diversity. Educate yourself about what issue you want to get involved in. "If you are working on climate change, learn what the current policy debates are all about," he says. "And set a goal to realize a change or innovation."

And of course, don't be afraid to practice Radical Inclusion—to reach out across borders, real and imagined, to form communities, and to work together with those communities to find answers. Jonah has dedicated his life to innovating precisely in this way: with the strength of the diverse, global community of social entrepreneurs he's brought together, let's hope he can inspire the next generation of youth leaders to innovate in a similarly daring way.

Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook

the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Call to Action: Engage with the growing community of youth philanthropists and social entrepreneurs Jonah is leading with NEXUS. Find out how you can get involved at <https://nexusglobal.org/>.

Stone Soup Leadership Institute
www.stonesoupleadership.org
www.soup4youngworld.com