



Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 654 Bonus, Interview with Jack Lekishon

Mariann: I'm so glad that Jack Leskishon, whose interview was quite extraordinary if you haven't heard it yet, agreed to join the flock this week. And it's really been amazing to find out so much about your work, Jack, and I did a little research about you before the interview.

And I was very moved, and I hope you don't mind talking about this. I was very moved by what you said about your mother. Can you tell us a little bit about your mother and your childhood and the influence she had on you? Because I was very moved when I read it.

Jack: Yes. Thank you so much. I think this is very interesting. And when you ask that question, I feel like tears are coming out of my eyes because, because of the life that I've grown in.

And basically my mother she's a very wonderful mother. We grow in a place called Olarro whereby during that time they depend on the local brews for selling for her to get my tuition school fees and also to get the basic needs, like shelter, like clothing. And that's how I grow. And we live in a very understanding situation since I grew...just as I said before when I was young, I grew through (eating) animal products feedings, of which I speak of on the interview, whereby learning has given me.

During this time when I was very young this is how my mother struggled. And then someone else had picked me to support me to go to school. Of course, I went away about one year or so, away from my mother, because someone else was supporting my schooling. And then after that of course I went through a very

difficult time when I was in the secondary school because every time I'm being sent back home to collect school fees.

And when I finished my...secondary school level can take someone four years when you study without any problem, or when you study as far...by the education requirement. But for me, I took five years in secondary because I was not attending the class on time because of the school fees, because of lack of tuition fee, every time I'm back home to collect fees. And when I reach home, of course, there was no funds to collect. So I can take two weeks, I can take one month away from school and then after some time I can go back again.

And when I finish the secondary school, I finished when I had USD 600 outstanding balance. And I went for one year and a half without collecting my certificates because of the pending payments.

So I work with a solar company in the local community where I do a lot of selling. And then I shifted to this Maasai Mara company, whereby I work at a women empowerment project, whereby they do a lot of community work. And I do market their products to guests to buy. And that's where I collected the USD 600 and be able to go back to school and collect my certificates.

My dream was to be a doctor and I applied for the same, but because of the tuition fee I had to drop and I find myself studying wildlife and environmental conservation and tourism management in Nairobi. Simply because tuition fee was somehow very low and that's why I decided, but I realized that is why my dream was lying because the whole passion that I have from now, right now, the whole things that I'm doing from a community, for my country and also globally is because of what I study.

So I think if I can see what had a purpose on this, and I realized that everything, every mistake happened for a reason. Because I moved from doctor to a conservationist. And this is my area where I am placed to play on when I'm still on this earth. After all, I think I was helped by two ladies from, from US who paid my tuition fee when I was in college and after everything is fine maybe after some time again, I will enroll for the degree.

Thank you for asking that question and that's how I can briefly say on how I grow, what challenges I went through and up to now, where I am.

Mariann: That's a, that's a wonderful story. And I love that your mother was an important force in your life and that other people helped along the way.

But I think the thing love most was that you went into conservation, basically it was all an accident. You really wanted to do something else, and yet you have found your life's purpose in that. And that's very inspiring.

So here's another question 50 years from now. What does the Maasai Mara look like? What is your dream for how things change and do you have a vision?

Jack: Yes, of course, in the next 50 years, I believe that Maasai Mara and the Maasai community will change for the better. And I believe that through changing the life and the mindset of the young people it is promising that the future generations are very much secure. Because when it comes to the environmental conservation, when it comes to the wildlife conservation, when it comes to the community empowerment, these three things going together will bring a very big impact to this community.

I believe that through this conservation projects and also through environmental projects...because of course, if we, you want to sustain wildlife conservation, you must also look at the environment or the habitats where these animals will survive to. And of course, if we want to succeed on the environmental conservation and the wildlife conservation, you have to look onto the community on how you can bring them together, on how you can bring them to incorporate, and on how you can bring them to also participate on this conservation to make it successful.

And that's why I have a dream that in the next 50 years the Maasai will live a very sustainable life. They will shift onto farming, which is more sustainable.

I believe also that through the tree planting projects that I'm going to set up, maybe after some time, will make the Maasai Mara go green. And of course the land will change.

And also through the conservation, I believe that in the next 50 years the number of elephants, the number of lions, the number of cheetahs will move to a big number, including the number of other animals on the land because of the conservation.

Mariann: I love that dream and I really hope it comes true.

Thank you so much for sharing it with us and thank you for joining us today. It's really been a pleasure to hear about the work you're doing. There aren't that many things that are exciting me these days but your work really excites me and it's looking towards the future.

Jack: Additionally, maybe I can add something.

Mariann: Sure.

Jack: Yes maybe additionally, what I am also looking into it...is that like what I've already raised to the Million Dollar Vegan...even though it's quite some time now when we have not really gotten an opportunity to secure, is that like the projects that are, I'm also focusing on when it comes to saving the life of donkeys.

When we try to save a lot of donkeys are suffering in the Maasai Mara in the local centers, because they're being misused. They're being...they're carrying a lot of heavy loads which is beyond their efforts and no one cares about them, they sleep anywhere But during...when someone want to use a donkey, they can go for it. But they can use it during the day, during the night. So you can find such animals, they have a lot of injuries that are being hit very hard. Some even have wounds and some even are dying, some have broken legs.

This is also another project that is already underwritten documents. And I already talked with Million Dollar Vegan that there is need for us to do a life saving for these animals. Whereby we can save them and we have...we can have a place to secure them to ensure that they're working or they're doing what they should do. Basically, that's what I can say.

And I believe that next time we will be able to have a wonderful time. And I believe that it is not be our last day to share on this. Every time that you need something to ask, every time that you need to have an interview with me, to acquire anything else, I'm always ready because I'm not here just to inspire Kenya, to inspire the Maasai community or to inspire the East Africa [unintelligible] land, but I'm here to inspire the world to make a change for a better tomorrow.

Mariann: Absolutely, I love that and I love that, that you're willing and those in Africa who are doing this work are willing to take leadership because I think the world desperately needs it. And I'm very happy to hear about your work with

donkeys, I had not heard about that at all before, so thank you for sharing that and for sharing everything with us, Jack.

Jack: Thank you too. And I'm grateful to connect with you. And I will be very grateful even to work with you. I believe that this time doesn't matter. All of us, we can make a change, as a global family, through our global solidarity. Thank you.