

## INTRODUCTION: MUSIC + SNIPPET OF EPISODE

The fact is that we've seen on and-- Like it's something we're gonna see more and more of.

There's literally more single-used masks in the midst of COVID in the mediterranean than there is fish already. And that's not stopping there, like 2050 is the big number, that people, the environmentalists that you hear from, there's gonna be more plastics in the ocean than fish, and that number will very very quickly-- yeah that could be in the next 10 years so we need to really really change this addiction we have.

## INTRODUCTION: MUSIC

**Achintya Nilsen** Hi everyone and welcome to another episode of the Seven Stones podcast. Today we have with us a guest, as part of our ongoing series 'Humans of Bali'. A series where we dive into serious conversations with diverse individuals and topics that form Bali's authenticity.

Sitting with me in the studio today is Gary Benchehib. An incredible human being who you might know better as the guy who, alongside his brother, rowed down the most polluted river in the world to raise awareness on plastic pollution. Gary has a history of working in media production, non profit organisations and of course, tackling the trash problem in and around Indonesia. He continues to not only raise awareness about these issues but actually do the work himself getting down and dirty in the river. I think at this point I'm just repeating all the greatly written articles mentioned about Gary so before i get carried away I'm going to say welcome hello and how are you?

**Gary Benchehib** Hey thank you so much Tya for having me on this very podcast.

**Achintya Nilsen** Thank you so much for coming here.

**Gary Benchehib** Big honour. I don't do a lot of podcasts, this is definitely awesome to be a part of this Humans of Bali series.

**Achintya Nilsen** I'm super excited, super excited. Thank you so much for coming.

For the audience out there listening to us, why don't you tell us a little bit background about yourself and who you are.

**Gary Benchehib** Yes for sure!

My name is Gary as Tya mentioned. Born in Paris but grew up in Bali, moved here when I was 8 years old and Bali has ever since been my home. I consider myself more Balinese than I do French, although that French accent has stuck with me.

But yeah, so, growing up in Bali, seeing the degradation of the beaches here, you know and I remember at 8 years old the most pristine beaches possible and then year by year with the rainy season you would see the effects of plastic pollution it was literally everywhere you went. Like it would be on the beaches, in the rivers, on the rice fields.

And then very very quickly i think with my brother and sister, I was 14 and we decided that we were gonna make a change. Not knowing exactly what that was going to be, as the youth of the island one of the things that's easy to do for young people to do is to go out and clean up. So we went out and set out a series of beach cleanups thinking that we were going to clean up Bali. So every weekend, we'd pick a different beach, only to realise that that very beach was polluted again. But that really is what inspired us to start 'Make A Change World' which is my full time job as an environmental activist and filmmaker.

**Achintya Nilsen** That's so cool. So you have a brother and sister?

**Gary Benchehib** Correct. So sister Kelly, she's 2 years older she's the eldest. I'm in the middle. Middle kid. And Sam, the younger brother. So I'm very lucky everyday to be working with my sister and brother.

**Achintya Nilsen** Nice keep it in the family.

**Gary Benchehib** Full family affair.

**Achintya Nilsen** Ya, So you grew up in Bali?

**Gary Benchehib** Correct, yes

**Achintya Nilsen** Since you were 8. Which school did you go to?

**Gary Benchehib** I went to the international school of Bali. Which is the Bali International School in Sanur. Now called, I think the 'Island School'? They changed their name. It was still the international school when I was there.

**Achintya Nilsen** What was that like to grow up in Bali as an international student, but then feel more Balinese?

**Gary Benchehib** Haha I guess, I mean like you know like every afternoon finishing up school at 2:45, having the afternoon to spend in nature. Whether that would be surfing, or running on the beach, or just being fully immersed in this beautiful island. And then very quickly, a background in music, always been a very big musician.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh really? What do you play?

**Gary Benchehib** Like growing up in Bali, I would like, join Gamelan ensembles and that would be like purely Balinese heart going into the culture.

**Achintya Nilsen** Ooh. That must've been so much fun!

That's like super.. Each part has its own thing and you have to be really connected right?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah yeah. I mean very interlocking rhythms. I mean from the kecak dancing and all that beautiful um yeah just-- music there.

But originally more of a pianist and guitar player. But that has extended, I also produce music with Balinese music embedded in it.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow that's cool.

So you implement Balinese stuff in a lot of the things you do?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah I think at the core-- I remember the first day I ever landed in Bali it was an eye opening. Stepping into this other world--

**Achintya Nilsen** Haha as a little 8 year old.

**Gary Benchehib** Having travelled from Paris, a long long flight. And then I've just really immersed, ever since, in this beautiful culture.

**Achintya Nilsen** And then after Bali, you went to New York right? For film school?

**Gary Benchehib** Yes, so after I graduated from the International School of Bali and as a musician applied to all these music schools around the world. But unfortunately a lot of these music schools, you needed like an SAT score or whatever. Then I didn't necessarily get into any.

So I applied to film school instead where I learned the beauty of storytelling, being in an environmental organisation... A lot of environmental organisations out there often struggle with how to tell stories, how to empower a message, how to speak to the masses. And so applied to the nearest film academy, where I did a one-year long video course, documentary filmmaking. And that really completely changed my path forever. Little did I know that I would have a passion for filmmaking and that has really been since 2014, that's been my main occupation.

**Achintya Nilsen** So you chose it based on the fact that like you kinda couldn't go to the path you wanted and then got something else, but got something beautiful out of it?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah I guess, I was using music in a way to-- in the environmental movements. So I would like, organise all these shows, where I would combine my DJing and my music playing ..

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh you're a DJ as well?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah.

**Achintya Nilsen** Just multi-talented.

**Gary Benchehib** And yeah organise my first concert in Kuta. It was like the first environmental concert on the island.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow.

**Gary Benchehib** This was in 2010, I was 15. And we got 5000 people on the beach of Kuta to be there in support of a cleaner Bali. We had big groups like 'Superman Is Dead' and Navicula which were like brothers to me.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow that's so much fun.

**Gary Benchehib** This was really I guess, the beginning of a chapter, back then environmentalism wasn't considered as sexy as it is today.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah haha.

**Gary Benchehib** As we would organize the weekly beach cleanups, we'd invite literally all our friends to come through... but most of the friends, being Bali kids, would rather spend their evenings out at Kuta or house parties. So no way of waking them up at 7[am]. But the people that would actually come to our cleanups were these rockstars, so like Superman Is Dead. Shoutout to Jerinx, one of my brothers of Bali. He would come out you know literally very very regularly, like twice a month or once a month. And when he would come out, he would bring like 300 supporters with him.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow like all his fans.

**Gary Benchehib** All of a sudden these cleanups that were like three, four, five people turned into like this big movement,

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow.

**Gary Benchehib** Of 300, 400, 500 people and yeah...Very grateful to them for that.

**Achintya Nilsen** So that's how you got started into music, and then went into film and--

If i'm not mistaken you speak Indonesian and Balinese as well.

**Gary Benchehib** Haha.

**Achintya Nilsen** I heard you the other day speaking some Balinese.

**Gary Benchehib** Bedik-bedik.

**Achintya Nilsen** Haha that's so cool. I mean not a lot of people you know, immerse themselves to that level so I really admire that.

**Gary Benchehib** Haha thanks.

**Achintya Nilsen** And then you went to New York and you, after the film school I'm assuming did some work with some really cool people as well?

**Gary Benchehib** I guess yeah I mean obviously when you're a freshly new graduated filmmaker you want to do is get more experience out there on the field. So did a couple internships here and there of which-- my first ever internship was at this production company, they just won an oscar for an amazing documentary called 'Free Solo.' I worked with Jimmy Chin and his wife Chai. And Free Solo is their latest film about Alex Honnold who solo climbs El Capitan. El Capitan is the biggest wall out in Yosemite. But it's also known as the screensaver on Mac.

**Achintya Nilsen** That's probably what I know it more as hahah.

**Gary Benchehib** Exactly hahah.  
But yeah so he does all that without any attachments or strings. Just fully like spiderman.

**Achintya Nilsen** What?!

**Gary Benchehib** And so Jimmy...

**Achintya Nilsen** And he survived?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah, you have to watch the film.

**Achintya Nilsen** Wow that's crazy. Yeah I do have to watch that.

**Gary Benchehib** But definitely like a very heart throbbing, like you know almost like a thriller in a way, an adventure documentary where you feel like you're put on the edge with Alex as he climbs it.

So that was an amazing way of learning how to do film and expeditions. So I was in the editing suite, a studio very much like this one, all day for an entire summer. I would just be binge watching all of Jimmy's shots that he... Jimmy's the first American to ski down Everest.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh wow.

**Gary Benchehib** Or the first person in the world to do that.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah hahaha.

**Gary Benchehib** He's like considered the 3rd most adventurous man in the world... There's a ranking.

**Achintya Nilsen** I didn't even know there was haha.

**Gary Benchehib** But yeah, Jimmy's like I guess the epitome of filmmaking meets adventure. He's like following Alex on a single rope with like a RED epic camera which is like 30 or 40 kilos of weight on his shoulder.

**Achintya Nilsen** I always think the documentarier if that's the right term is always just...

**Gary Benchehib** Documentarist?

**Achintya Nilsen** I don't know hahah. Is always just as incredible as the person doing these things, because they have to continuously shoot right?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah. So this style of filmmaking was vérité filmmaking. Vérité is like literally 'fly on the wall', another reference where literally you're behind the camera and the characters or the people that you're filming are pretending that you're not there and you're just literally a fly on the wall filming.

So learning from them was amazing, and one of my teachers actually was the editor behind Free Solo, Bob Eisenheart, and he's considered as the best editor in the world for vérité filmmaking. And so yeah that was an amazing, amazing internship.

Then after that did an internship at Vice which then prolonged to a full time job, and that was also in the edit suites doing post production, learning how to edit well, learning how to organise an entire office. Footage coming in, how do you actually process it, how do you work on subtitling, graphics, all that and that was I guess a key experience for our videos with 'Make A Change'.

**Achintya Nilsen** So that's how you.. With all that experience and doing all that, was what kind of inspired 'Make A Change World'?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah so we literally took this environmental thing that we'd started as like young teens and applied it to rebrand 'Make A Change Bali' at the time, to 'Make A Change World'. A full environmental media outlet based out of New York, Paris and Bali now.

**Achintya Nilsen** So just to give the listeners some brief, what exactly is 'Make A Change World'?

**Gary Benchehib** So 'Make A Change World' is an environmental media outlet focused around making plastic pollution front page news. So we do that by going on the craziest projects out there, whether that's rowing down the most polluted river or running across continents, we wanna make sure that politicians are hearing our message.

**Achintya Nilsen** So you and your brother are just doing crazy adventures all the time and videoing it?

**Gary Benchehib** I guess yeah, from one adventure that really inspires the next. As you're literally on that run or on that kayaking trip, you start thinking about those projects and as soon as you sit down on your couch and are not doing an adventure you're like 'damn, I need to step out my comfort zone again and go on another adventure'.

**Achintya Nilsen** So you briefly mentioned it before how like growing up here and seeing the trash that's what got you into the trash problem.

But I'm just trying to picture the mindset of like a little 14 year old; you know everyone here grows up and sees the trash problem, and what differentiates you and made you think 'okay I have to do something about this' and your whole family I guess?

What pushed you to get into that?

**Gary Benchehib** I guess it's that core love for the island, as I was describing it before, there's definitely an attachment to protecting Bali, to being a part of it, to feeling Balinese... again that French accent...

**Achintya Nilsen** Hahah feeling Balinese with a French accent.

**Gary Benchehib** But truly Bali has touched us and we want to protect it for generations to come. It's our own island and we can use it as a key pilot to show the world that we're a sustainable hub. And I think the process and progress since 2009, when we founded 'Make A Change,' has been so amazing to see, you know, all these environmental movements start, you know, from the Green School to so many innovators and entrepreneurs leading the forefront here on Bali. So yeah I guess, just that.

But then when you start diving in deeper into the trash problem, you realise that it's just coming and actually since we produce three times more plastic than we did in the 80s and that number is set to double in the next decade. And so if you think about it that way, you see positivity all around you and make sure you're surrounded with positivity and solutions and more optimistic views. But at the same time we're just not owning up to the actual problem and I think there's so much to be done when you've seen a polluted beach or a river completely clogged in plastic.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah I think that's also important, as positive as we can be like there still needs to be something done about it right. You can't just be like 'oh something is being done', us as people need to step up to it as well.

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah and I mean plastics was invented as this material back in the early 1900s as this very easy to use material. It was cheap, it was super easy to transport; especially when they started switching glass bottles in the 70s to plastic bottles. But then as soon as that was introduced it completely has changed how we transport goods, but more so how we consume products. Now when you look at a shelf whether it's a supermarket or pasar in Java, everything is wrapped in plastic.

**Achintya Nilsen** And it wasn't even introduced here until like super recent right? In the whole timeline of things?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah like I would say in Indonesia that really took off in the 80s and then has progressively changed within the last 15-20 years, where literally every product out there is sachets as we know it. In any warungs or whatever.

So the human race has become addicted to plastic, and the real big issue is that plastic will never go away. There's been studies out there that everybody out there has plastics inside of their bodies. Or inside their brains, inside their blood flow...

**Achintya Nilsen** So we do right now?

**Gary Benchehib** We do right now.

**Achintya Nilsen** Wow that's crazy.

**Gary Benchehib** I probably have a little more than you haha.

**Achintya Nilsen** Haha just been here longer, and you're always in the river I guess hahah.

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah that's a lot of information I didn't even know. That's why it inspires you to keep on doing what you're doing.

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah and I guess also travelling down the world's most polluted river.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah and then that actually led you to meet the president right?  
I saw a video. How was that?

**Gary Benchehib** Yes, great research.

**Achintya Nilsen** He's like one of my favourite people. He's so cool.

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah super, super cool. But yeah so, going back, rewinding a little bit.

So living in the US, being in New York after the internships, moving 'Make A Change' to more of a media oriented business or NGO / enterprise. We started to think about how we could combine our passions of adventure with filmmaking and activism. That is what really inspired the first expedition, which I did on the summer of 2016 with a couple friends. And that was to go down the Mississippi river, one of the most polluted rivers in the world, on plastic bottles. Very inspired by Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, not sure if you read the epic novel of the US.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah I read it haha.

**Gary Benchehib** But very, very similar. Made a junk raft for 2 months, except we didn't make it ourselves, we had two Swiss engineers that were some of our friends from Switzerland that we got on to the project. And for two months they crafted this amazing swiss-made junk raft out of 800 plastic bottles. The sail was even made from old tents stitched together, we had a solar panel on board and for two months literally rowed down the river from Minnesota all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. Thinking, looking out for those big patches of plastic in our rivers to prove to the world that we need to start thinking on land where this problem is actually created.

So many people and so many movements back then would be pointing the fingers to the ocean, not really knowing where it came from. But the truth of the problem if we wanna stop this constant flow of plastics is stopping it at the source. So rivers in a way, were the perfect connection point from land to the ocean. And that Mississippi trip proved to be such a powerful-- changed my life forever, to see this idea of recycled expeditions. We were literally a recycled exposé, going from harbour to harbour, and we became the gossip of that summer. We had a live tracker on our...

**Achintya Nilsen** "Have you seen those two brothers?" hahah.

**Gary Benchehib** Like people would come along, meet us at harbours just wanting to see the boat, just wanting to engage with us. And the amount of generosity on the

Mississippi, like I feel rivers in a way, they bring people more down to earth and a lot of river people are very humble, they're super chill, very very chill...

**Achintya Nilsen** And it's like a life source right?

**Gary Benchehib** Sometimes too chill.. Hahah.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh hahah.

**Gary Benchehib** We had a dude that literally was following our live tracker on our website and he pulled out like one evening as we were pulling off like in this remote island to moore for the night like the Mississippi was literally like, you know, island by island choosing where we were going to stay the night with our tents. But this guy had been following us all day with the live tracker and he comes out of the forest with fried chicken. To feed us. Cause he's like "I've been following your journey!"

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh my gosh hahah.

**Gary Benchehib** It was the best surprise of the night after a long day on the boat.

**Achintya Nilsen** You guys are the famous river people.

**Gary Benchehib** On the Mississippi we produced some of the first micro plastic tests, you know basically had this net, it's called a Manta Trawl, that you have at the back of your boat and you're collecting samples to see what the quantities of microplastics are in the river. And on the Mississippi we were studying these results with the Louisiana State University only to realise that there's trillions of microplastic particles that are flowing through the Gulf of Mexico right at the mouth every single day. And the Mississippi dredges about 60% of US waters, so like the Missouri river, the Illinois river, all come through the Mississippi. The Great Lakes even dredge through the Mississippi. And so that was completely eye opening when you hear America's most epic waterway is filled with microplastics. The particles [are] so small that you can't even see by the naked eye. So that's really what inspired the next project. That next summer of doing another recycled expedition but this time really to capture the most shocking visuals to prove that this addiction we have to plastic is actually a real one.

**Achintya Nilsen** And people don't really think about that either right cause they don't think about what they're consuming to that level where it affects the entire system.

**Gary Benchehib** The thing to change mindsets as well is when you see that photo of the plastic with its turtle. Sorry. When you see the photo of the turtle with the plastic straw up its nose then it really resonates, you don't wanna see that. You don't wanna see nature hurting. But the fact is that we've seen on... Like it's something we're gonna see more and more of.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah.

**Gary Benchehib** There's literally more single-used masks in the midst of COVID in the mediterannean than there is fish already.

**Achintya Nilsen** What? That's crazy.

**Gary Benchehib** And that's not stopping there, like 2050 is the big number, the environmentalists that you hear from, there's gonna be more plastics in the ocean than fish, and that number will very very quickly um, yeah that could be in the next 10 years so we need to really really change this addiction we have.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah. Is it just you and your brother on this? Obviously we know there's a whole team of people right?

**Gary Benchehib** So on the Mississippi it was actually me with five friends. Sam didn't join that one.

**Achintya Nilsen** Okay.

**Gary Benchehib** But Sam joined the Citarum. Which was the first brother expedition that we did.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh okay. And then now 'Make A Change World' has an entire team behind you?

**Gary Benchehib** No actually 'Make A Change World' is just still...

**Achintya Nilsen** Just you two?

**Gary Benchehib** The three of us. With Kelly.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh right right right.

**Gary Benchehib** But yeah for set projects we have friends, close friends who believe in the projects. We work with freelancers all the time but yeah, slowly growing. The team now being focused more on the media side and how do we actually monetise this thing.

**Achintya Nilsen** And that's not just Bali or Indonesia. It's like a worldwide plastic problem too, right?

**Gary Benchehib** Unfortunately this global problem is a worldwide one. And a piece of plastic in Bali could very [well] be coming from Sydney as much as it could be coming

from LA, and vice versa. So it's a global one and we have to address the global population about the ultimate reduction.

**Achintya Nilsen** And also like, something you mentioned the other day that I didn't even think about, was how connected the whole plastic problem is to everything we do. Like you're currently working on the "Pemulung Project?"

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah.

**Achintya Nilsen** Which, do you want to go into about that?

**Gary Benchehib** For sure yeah.

Yes so there's-- so in the midst of COVID, oil prices have dropped and it's caused, you know, just, recyclable rates to completely drop as well. So it's not as easy to recycle plastic as we used to. And ultimate producers involved in big oil are producing plastic like never before, at a crazy rate. And because we're all really scared of this ultimate pandemic, you know, from a medical standpoint and from a hygiene standpoint people think it's better to buy packaged products right now, or foods packaged in plastic, than it is to buy or to use reusables.

**Achintya Nilsen** To go to the market, yeah.

**Gary Benchehib** And so, that has affected, here in Indonesia, the waste picker communities, Pemulungs. And so all throughout our projects we've always been very in respect of the Pemulungs especially on the Citarum. There working directly with a village that's fully, they have about 58 scavengers on the Citarum, going out with boats to actually clean up the river. But it's always been a project that we've always been very, that we've cared deeply about. And here in Bali even more. You know, there's 3.7 million scavengers all around Indonesia. They are such a crucial part of the waste management infrastructure. They are responsible to collect 1 million tonnes of plastic a year in Indonesia. Which is an incredible amount. I think it's about-- not sure of the exact percentage but a huge amount. So we just finished a campaign, or are working on a campaign, to really see how we can bring them as heroes and celebrate their efforts, in the midst of this crazy times. And see how we can fundraise for them as well. To make sure that they are provided with health insurances, and the basic food packages that they need. So working directly with Octopus Indonesia, and Danon Aqua here as well.

**Achintya Nilsen** So this is something that I am actually super--what I was saying in the beginning, what I really admire you for is that, you don't just talk about making a change, you're like going out there, you're doing the changes. You're also informing people about the changes. How does that feel, or like, what do you wish you could tell people more to-- I feel like there's a lot of, not necessarily fear, but apathy almost; where people think 'oh I can't--there's so much that--this problem is too big for me'. But like I want to say that, you know, you can do the little

thing, and that will be enough-- better than doing nothing. So how do you kind of inspire people to not be so afraid to go and do the changes that you do.

**Gary Benchehib** I think every little action helps, you know. And that's something that we never really realize. But if a million people were to refuse plastic tomorrow, that'd be a million people refusing plastic. And I think that, definitely another moment for me that completely changed my life was going down the most polluted river, where we literally, you know it was an atrocity at large. And I think, the thing that I say a lot is that, you know, if everybody were to experience the Citarum River we'd be in such a different state. Because that was literally the worst conditions that you can ever experience, of a very river being fully destroyed, essentially a moving landfill, with trash to the brink at every, you know, burning piles of trash, landfills almost popping over the riverbanks. Yeah that, literally stepping into Mars or something, like this surreal world where that's been fully destroyed. If the human race were to leave, plastic would remain. And that's what the Citarum is.

So as hard as it is, I think that, you know, sometimes facing reality and facing the true cost of what we've produced with this material, but also the environmental consequences-- other environmental consequences, I think that we have to face, yeah reality. And take a stand, and do our minimal bits to solve this problem.

**Achintya Nilsen** And you-- I know you travelled a lot before COVID, right?

**Gary Benchehib** Well, not too much.. I would,

**Achintya Nilsen** But you're mostly based in Bali?

**Gary Benchehib** Mainly based in Indonesia. But yeah, trying to obviously travel as little as possible. And travels typically are put in one. So you try to-- you don't just travel to go somewhere you'd try to make the most out of travel.

**Achintya Nilsen** Does it ever get overwhelming to be doing all of this, or have this on your shoulders and try reach-- have that global reach?

**Gary Benchehib** I mean, at the end of the day I think that, sure a video on social media can produce really well and go viral. But what is the most rewarding is going out there every day and knowing the actual impact that you have with your bare hands. And so that's for us lately, most lately been in the creation of Sungai Watch, which is our latest project, to clean rivers all around the world. But it's the world's first open source river cleanup platform. Where you basically, we're launching it on Hari Sungai National, which is this July 27th [2020]. So you're able to login into our website, and literally have for free all full blueprints and how to videos on how to create your own trash barriers.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh! All around the world?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah. So it's for free. Anybody can adopt it. I think that, you know, releasing videos about polluted rivers, especially after the Citarum where we kayaked down it on two plastic bottle kayaks, I feel like people were asking, you know, how do we actually solve this problem? In India, and Nigeria, and Cambodia and South America. And by placing simple solutions-- a simple barrier, you know, made from bamboo or made from PVC pipe, or it can even be made from a little mesh that you put together from recycled materials, you're able to stop the problem and stop the endless flow.

So that's really where this idea of being involved on the ground, how can we inspire a global movement of people cleaning rivers, looking at rivers from a different point of view. Here in Indonesia, we look at them as garbage cans, as toilets. And so yeah we have to change that mentality, we have to make sure that we-- we're respecting these pristine alleyways [that] are so resourceful for our planet. They provide water, they provide such a variety of fish. So yeah, it's changing that mindset.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah. And I think it's great too because I think, essentially a lot of people want to do something or want to help out, but they don't have these simple solutions. And you're providing that for them. So that's pretty great.

**Gary Benchehib** Thank you.

**Achintya Nilsen** And is trash work something you see yourself doing long term, or are you going to hand it over, or take this project to a level where you can kind of package it and be like "here you go, I'm handing it to this person and I can now retire."

**Gary Benchehib** No I think our river-- rivers, have definitely been the core fundamental-- that's where we, our focus, you know from doing beach cleanups just seeing and realizing that actually 90% of it comes from land. So I think that the beginning of the conversation is trash, because that's the more visual stuff. But ultimately, you know, we really want to change the perspective of rivers in general. So we're not going anywhere. We're going to be dedicating our lives to rivers.

**Achintya Nilsen** Your entire life?

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah.

But I mean like, right now we're trying to set up our first community garden. By a river bank, right here in Tibubeneng, in this village. This is our pilot Desa, village of Tibubeneng, Berawa, Canggu. And so yeah, you know, like every river is protected. So we're actually protecting a 4km stretch of coastline right here. So every little 'gots' even, we have a solution on. But yeah we want to make it community driven, we want to make it local. And eventually scale it up through this platform where we're giving all solutions

for free out there for people to be inspired. And for people to openly share their learnings as they adopt these solutions.

**Achintya Nilsen** And if people wanted to get directly involved, what would they be doing or how could they--

**Gary Benchehib** So you can come out to one of our river cleanups, every week on Saturday's and Sunday's depending on the location. You can volunteer, if you'd like. You can come farming with us at our community farm.

**Achintya Nilsen** That sounds fun.

**Gary Benchehib** You can adopt your own river solution,

**Achintya Nilsen** Adopt a river?

**Gary Benchehib** So you can build your own trash barrier based on the models.

**Achintya Nilsen** Oh right, based on the blueprints that you're releasing.

**Gary Benchehib** Yeah. But you can also adopt hahah.

**Achintya Nilsen** Hahah. This is my river.

**Gary Benchehib** From the sponsorship model, you could do that. You could name a solution. You could be part of one crazy adventure with us. And if you want to go on your own adventure, we'd be happy to follow you do it.

**Achintya Nilsen** Yeah, so if anyone wants to go on a crazy adventure...Go hit up Gary.

And I just always like to always end this on a bit of a philosophical note. So is there kind of a piece of advice you generally give, you a philosophy of life that you like to follow on the daily?

**Gary Benchehib** I think waking up every day and knowing you're doing something good for the planet. And going to sleep knowing that today you did a good deed. And whether that's the same thing everyday, that's okay. But at least you know that we're advancing society, moving it forward towards a more sustainable planet. And doing that everyday and really realizing the impact that you've done. Yeah just warms your heart and boosts you for the next day to do another good deed.

**Achintya Nilsen** That's beautiful.

Thank you so much for joining us today.

**Gary Benchehib** Thank you so much Tya.

**Achintya Nilsen** And if the audience were interested to learn more from you, how would they be able to reach you?

**Gary Benchehib** So you can either email me directly at [gary@makeachange.world](mailto:gary@makeachange.world) or you can instagram me, [@garybenchehib](https://www.instagram.com/garybenchehib) or [@makeachange.world](https://www.instagram.com/makeachange.world).

Thank you.

**Achintya Nilsen** Okay, there you have it.

Thank you to all you listeners for tuning in to this episode of our podcast.

Let us know what kind of conversations you'd like to listen to on the Seven Stones Podcast.

And we will see you in our next episode.