



JASON ALEXANDER INTERVIEW
PORTIONS USED IN: *THE THREAD SEASON ONE*

Jason Alexander, Comedian & Actor
April 15, 2023
Interviewed by David Bender
Total Running Time: 46 minutes

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Jason Alexander
Comedian & Actor

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Interview Archive
Life Stories
Kunhardt Film Foundation

Jason Alexander
Comedian & Actor

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DAVID BENDER:

Start by saying you were born as...

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JASON ALEXANDER:



My birth name- My God-given name—which I always find is a strange phrase because it's really my mom, although my mom and God, very close—I was, born as Jay. Not Jason. Jay Scott Greenspan. I am still Jay Scott Greenspan. And if you do know me, you probably know me as Jason Alexander. Because when I was 14, I joined my first acting union, and it wasn't about “hide the Jewishness of Greenspan,” it was about playground trauma.

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I was Green-“fill in the blank with any horrible thing you wanted.” So when I went to get a stage name, they said, “Would you like a stage name?” I said, “Yes, I would.” My mom named me Jay, but always called me Jason. So I was used to Jason, and I said, “Okay, I'm gonna be Jason Scott.” And the woman at the AFTRA counter said, “We have 11 of them in every spelling you can come up with, so you can't have it.” And I, in a blind panic—I never thought about another name—in that moment, I went,-

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-“Oh, bet my dad doesn't feel great about me wanting to lose his name, so I'll just, how about Jason Alexander?” ‘Cause my dad was Alex Greenspan. And, they said, “Yeah, we can have that.” So it was barely a full thought in the blink of a moment.

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DAVID BENDER:
And out of necessity...

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JASON ALEXANDER:



Always born out of necessity. I don't do anything if it isn't a necessity.

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DAVID BENDER:

I want to ask you, why is storytelling important in our culture and in life?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

I don't know why storytelling is so intrinsically a part of the human experience, but I do know it is. We know that going back to prehistoric time, from as early as humans could stand upright, there was some effort to share our experiences. And whether that was with a spoken language, or whether that was depicted with paintings on a wall, or movement, there was always some desire to reenact our experience for each other.

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Sometimes it is about- The experience resonates with us in such a powerful way that the only way to contain it in ourselves is to share it with others, to sort of give pieces of it away. Other times, there's an excitement or a call to educate or inform somebody else through an experience that you've had. Sometimes—and I don't know why human beings are drawn to this—we have an innate desire to entertain and amuse each other, to share laughter.

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I've recently learned we're not the only creatures on this planet that are capable of laughing, but we seem to have mastered the art, and we seem to require it. And we really seem to require it at times of great stress or challenge. When they came up with that great phrase, "Laughter is the best



medicine,” there is truth to that. So I think we are called to storytelling for all of those reasons,-

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-to literally try and divest ourselves a little bit of something that is so overwhelming we can't contain it, or to help inform each other and educate each other, or this strange calling we seem to have to entertain and amuse each other as, I assume, a way of bonding and holding our mutual humanity. But it is ancient and I hope it is eternal. If we lose it, I think we essentially lose our humanity itself.

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DAVID BENDER:

First of all, I can't let that go unasked, what other creatures that you've recently learned know about laughter?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

So, I was watching a documentary recently, and you can tickle rats. And they actually make- Their laughter is pitched higher than most people can hear, but they have recorded it. You can—I know from firsthand experience having worked with an orangutan—you can tickle and elicit laughter from primates. So at least those, and I believe there is more. I could be wrong about that.

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DAVID BENDER:



You come into this profession and this craft with an opportunity that you've had. You've been in a series that virtually everyone has seen somewhere at some point. How has that impacted your ability to tell stories? People are looking to you and listening to you, they'll come up to you. Now obviously, they'll come up to you at some points as your character,-

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-but that also opens a door for you to be heard in other ways as Jay, not Jason. Talk about that opportunity.

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JASON ALEXANDER:

So, like it or not, with notoriety or with celebrity, most celebrities, for some reason or another, seem to be an object of fascination and attention for people. I assume with someone like me that it is because the audience and I have shared an experience together, or it's perceived that we've shared it together. In my particular case, through the Seinfeld show specifically,-

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-the most resonant thing that I hear about that shared experience are people who come up to tell me about some very challenging time they were going through in their life. Anything from the loss of a child or a parent, to a personal illness, to serving overseas in the military, you name it. A period of time where joy was elusive.

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And they approached me to thank me for helping them to laugh, helping them to reconnect to some kind of—even if it's just a moment—happiness, joy, laughter, and how therapeutic and appreciated it was. And so there's that



bond. My response to that is, it is the only kind of compliment that I can take easily because I understand, and I tell this to my fellow actors all the time, we are not powerful.

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This idea that we are celebrities, we are powerful, look at this powerful thing we can do- I began performing as a magician. I was always well aware, I didn't have any powers. The illusion has the power. The illusion is what's powerful for people, not the person. So, the event, the connection, the result of what our work does for the audience, that is powerful. We're just a cog in the works.

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But when they share the response with me of how helpful it has been at any given moment to have that work in their lives, that is the one compliment that I'm able to absorb. When they just go, "You're so funny, or I think you're great," or whatever that may be, I—as truly a shy, more-introverted-than-anyone-would-believe person—I kind of can't take that in as readily as someone going, "That thing you did really helped me."

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The reason that I... kind of relish that is my mom, who was a nurse and a nurse educator all her life- The one disappointment—if there was any disappointment 'cause "Jewish mother cannot be disappointed in her child"—the one disappointment that she had was she felt that because of the direction I was taking, that it would be harder for me to live a life of service.

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And that was the thing she would always talk about. If you can live a life of service to this world, to other people, it's a good life. And she certainly- That



was her life. And when I went into acting, I could not imagine it as a life of service. I did it- First of all, I fell into it. Second of all, I was attracted to it because it seemed to be serving me. I was a kid without a community. I was a kid without a real sense of self. I was a kid who was quite frightened and not terribly good at a lot of things,-

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-and suddenly had community, and I had encouragement, and I seemed to have had an ability. So it was all good for me. It was very, very good for me. And then they started paying me, and then they said, "You can make a living at this." And at the end of every stage performance, they go, "Yay, you're so great. Thank you." And all of that is just an ego trip. but it didn't seem to be serving much of anybody other than myself.

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But, when I am able to meet and hear people say, "No, no, no, no, no. That thing you did, that thing you were a part of, helped me. Helped me. Got me through something. Got me over something. Reconnected me to myself." That then becomes, "Oh, maybe I- Maybe mom, I stumbled into that life of service after all."

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DAVID BENDER:

Making your mother proud, did she get to see how much of your impact, and did you ever have that discussion where, "I've now seen what my work can do and help affect people?"

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Both my parents were blessed with longevity and both of them lived many, many years in the meat of my success in this chosen field. So they got to see it. They got to breathe a sigh of relief, that it would all seemingly work out. My father actually stopped wishing I would be an orthodontist, which was- That was huge. That was a big get.

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And yes, I would talk to my mother frequently about very specific occasions that were uniquely striking, where this sense of service by doing just what I do seemed to prevail. And she loved those stories. Absolutely loved them.

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DAVID BENDER:

This is part of our tradition, the Jewish tradition of- and I always... I was not Bar Mitzvah-ed. You were?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

I was Bar Mitzvah-ed. Yes. And that was about the last time Judaism and I shook hands. Or religion, I should say. Religion and I shook...

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DAVID BENDER:

I think the word is *tzedakah*.

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Yes.

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DAVID BENDER:

And that's the tradition of doing good in the world, of being purposeful in the world. Do you feel that connection to that- the culture of Judaism? Does that connect at all to you?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Certainly, I do feel the connection, very specifically to the culture of Judaism. And I have no particular- If I was a religious person, I'd be very happy to be a religious Jew. I think it's a very- in many ways, a very friendly religion. I am intensely spiritual, I'm just not terribly religious. But the- Well, I think it is, unfortunately and fortunately, part of the human condition that we have an affinity for our tribe, whatever our tribe may be.

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So I am very warmed by the feeling of the cultural landscape that is Judaism. The values that it contains, the history that it contains, the ideals it tries to uphold and work for, its sense of humor, are all- I have them on a cellular level. I couldn't walk away from it if I wanted to. So yeah, it is a deep connection.

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DAVID BENDER:



I talked to you about your work to bring some dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, something that is in short supply right now, but you made it a cause. Tell me about that. I know that one person, as is often the case, touched you with a story. Please tell me about that.

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JASON ALEXANDER:

So I was involved, and in some way still am, for many, many years with an organization called One Voice, which is essentially a movement that had a specific methodology at the time that I was working heavily with it, to engage the moderate populations of Israelis and Palestinians to more or less negotiate the platform for their own peace agreement.

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Perceiving the trouble to be a failure of leadership and having anecdotally heard from the moderates on both sides when it began how similar their vision of a peace was, it was perplexing to the two gentlemen that began the organization that it hadn't already occurred. And so, they began this process of literally bringing moderates together from both communities, and formulating propositions for a peace platform that they eventually hoped-

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-the majority of the populations would sign on to and then bring to their respective leadership and say, "Just do this." The two gentlemen that I met were, a fascinating guy, Daniel Lubetzky, who's a Mexican-born Jewish man, who speaks nine languages that I know of, and Danny is best known right now as the creator, founder, CEO of Kind Bars, which have become immensely popular.



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And his partner in One Voice, that I was aware of, was an Israeli Arab by the name of Mohammad Darawshe. And when I got involved with them, I was interested but ignorant of the peace process and what the real issues were that were preventing it or challenging it. They came to Danny DeVito and Rhea Pearlman's home, and they made a presentation and it was very compelling. But what got me, what made me stand up and go, "Okay, I'd like to help you if I can," was Mohammad.

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Mohammad told this really compelling story about his son, Fadi. And he said his son, who I think when I met them was about 13 or 14 years old, his son came to him and said, "Papa, do you remember how I was the worst in the mathematics in my class, and I said to you I'm going to be the best in my class at mathematics?" And Mohammad said, "I do remember that." And he said, "And I did it, didn't I?" And he said, "Yes, you did. Congratulations. You succeeded." And he said, "Remember, I was just an okay soccer player, but I told you I was gonna be the captain of the soccer team?"

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He said, [Jason nods.] And he said, "And I did it, didn't I?" He said, "Yes, you did, Fadi, I'm very proud of you." And he said, "Papa, I'm gonna be a martyr." And at the time that I met Mohammad when he was telling this story, he said, "I'm here today to ask for whatever help you can give me to make my son not keep this promise." And I can't even say it now without tearing up. It was a father fighting for the life of his son, a son in a family where he was surrounded by love, surrounded by education.

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This child was not being educated at a *madrassa*. He was a sophisticated young Arab boy being educated largely in Israel, but his perception of the conflict and its intractability led him to believe the best contribution he could make would be to kill himself for the cause and kill others in the doing of it.

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And I was so struck by that, that I went up to Danny and Mohammad and went, "I don't think there's a damn thing I can do for you, but if you do, I'll do it and you just let me know what it is." And what they said was, "In Israel, peace initiatives are like tissues. Everybody has a box of them. None of them mean anything. They're disposable." He said, "We have been working for several years to get some attention to what we're doing, and the press isn't interested. People aren't interested.

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But if you came, you're a big deal in Israel. We could make some- We could get some attention." I said, "Okay, I can do that, but I can't be your spokesperson. I'm not an Israeli. I'm not a Palestinian. If I were any of those two, and some jerk from America came over with a TV show to tell me how to make peace in my country, I'd be pretty damn peeved at that guy. But what I can do is thank everyone from coming and say, 'I'm glad you're here. Here's your photo op. Now listen to these guys, please.'"

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And that's what I did. I went over with them many times, but in doing that, I got to meet a large, large number of Israelis and Palestinians who were both very active in the peace movement and very reluctant about the peace movement, and you hear a fairly wide range of perspective about it all. And when we began, I was extremely hopeful that we would get to a two-state



solution where there would be dignity and autonomy for both nations. And unfortunately, I think we have moved farther from that rather than closer.

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DAVID BENDER:

What years- When did you start? When did this happen?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

I was- The bulk of my onsite work with them were three or four occasions between 2000 and 2008, I would say.

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DAVID BENDER:

What has become of Fadi? Do you know?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

I haven't talked to Darawshe in a long time- Mohammad rather, in a long time. I met Fadi. I had dinner at Mohammad's house. He was a terrific kid. I don't know for sure. My guess is- My hope is that Fadi realizes there's work to be done, but it's not the path of a martyr. It's the path of a leader. And my hope is, if anything, that we hear about Fadi Darawshe as a major force in Palestinian politics come down the road.

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DAVID BENDER:

As you look at life now—and we're gonna talk about some of the context of America—what makes you hopeful? Does anything make you hopeful?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Yes. I think there is reason for hope, globally. The narrative that we are being fed right now in this year of our Lord, 2023, is of desperation and division, and a lot of the division perhaps being a byproduct of desperation. There's... I mean, there's a lot of people struggling, just a lot of people struggling.

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And... when you're struggling like that, you are living in a state of fear, and any grade-C scientist will tell you, when any animal is living in a state of fear long enough, that fear will turn to rage. You cannot sustain living in fear. You can chase an animal into the corner. When it's cornered, it doesn't just sit there and lay down and die. It turns around and does its best to fight back.

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It becomes as rageful and empowered as that animal can be. Now I think that's a lot of what we're seeing is anger and rage and turmoil born of fear and challenges. I have a theory about why we are so divided. It's just mine, I haven't heard it from anywhere else, but it all comes from Y2K. So if you recall the story we were told about the change of the century “Y2K”-

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-was that our computer systems, our technological systems couldn't handle the calendar change, and they would collapse, which meant worldwide technology would collapse, and because our human existence is so tied to the



success of our technologies now, we would be existentially challenged. And then, January 2 showed up and everybody went, “Still here...”

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And so we dismissed that idea that we were coming into a cataclysmic new century, and we went, “Oh, it's just a turn of the calendar page.” It was not just a turn of the calendar page. The 21st century, in these 23 years, barely resembles the 20th century. It is such a radical shift, and it happened so fast.

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So now let's look at the two political values in the world: progressive, conservative. If you're a progressive, change excites you, it interests you. You're not fearful of change. You may be a little bit wary, you may be overwhelmed, but you're not fearful of change. New technology shows up. You go, “Well, that's interesting. Let's explore that.” New possibilities? “Let's explore that.” New communities, new cultures, new powers, you go, “If they're decent people, if they're part of the human experience, great!”

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White man's had his day. Bye-bye. Now we're just part of the tapestry. Okay, we didn't do such a great job. Maybe it's better we take second or third position. No fear in that. But if you are a conservative, change is a frightening thing. Conservatives believe in tradition. They believe in stability. They cherish the history and change, especially fast change, radical change, is frightening because they don't see themselves being a part of it.

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They fear perhaps that they can't keep up with it, and that they're gonna get lost, and that somehow they're gonna suffer. Well, those two ideologies, to me, are as ingrained in your system as your sexual preference. You don't



choose to be a progressive. You don't choose to be a conservative. It's kind of wired in. And so, right now you have a pace of change going faster than it's ever moved in human evolution, and you've got a whole bunch of people that are going,-

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“Okay, let's explore that. Let's see where it goes. We're not gonna stop it. Everything that is alive changes. So let's keep a watchful lie on that change. But let's not be frightened by it.” Conservatives are going, “I don't even know where we are. I don't know what's going on. How can we be abandoning our traditions, our systems?” And then so, they're pulling that way, pulling back. “Slow this thing down. Go the other way if you have to, to counter that movement.”

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And so you have the entire movement of the Earth being pulled in two different directions. And what we are experiencing, I believe, is the seam. It's all that stress and tension on the seam. And everybody is going, from both sides, “It's going to rip. It's going to rip. If we don't stop this, it's going to rip.” But because I am a progressively minded person, I go,-

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-“It will tear. It may even be destroyed, but something else will come. And it's inevitable, so why don't we just get there?” And by the way, those of you who are excited about this over here, how about a little sympathy and compassion for the people that are afraid of it? In the same way I wouldn't yell at someone whose sexual preference is different than mine, like, “What's wrong with you?” I find it hard to look at my conservative community, friends,



whatever it may be, and go, "You're wrong, you're bad, you're evil, you're stupid."

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That's not what they are. What they are is concerned and potentially frightened, and they truly believe that we are going in a destructive direction. And in some ways, if you want to take them at their most humane, they're trying to save us and save themselves. And so this tear, here's why I have hope. The younger generations I see are not embedded in these traditions.

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And for reasons I don't understand, the very far right, conservatives are changing their history and abandoning some of their traditions in very self-destructive ways. In ways that I as a progressive go, "You shouldn't let go of that so fast. That's good stuff. That's important stuff." But because of this growing number of a generation that are not enmeshed in those concerns-

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-and are more and more excited by the technologies of the future, the cultural understandings of the future- When my older son, Gabe, was three years old, he was in preschool, and there was a child in that class who was by any obvious measure, either gay or trans or queer or whatever, but was not a cisgender male boy of that age.

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And one day we came in and all the- for some reason, all the boys were playing together and all the girls were playing together along with this child. And my son, my little three year old said, "Well, something must be going on 'cause the boys are playing together and the girls are playing together." And my wife said, "Well, that's not true. So-and-so was playing with the girls." And

my three-year-old, with nothing on it, went, “Mom, so-and-so is kind of a girl boy,” to protect that child.

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He was telling his mother that, my wife, so that she wouldn't make this boy feel strange about his choice. This was my three year old son's innate protective reaction to this child that was so different from him. We didn't teach that, or maybe we did without knowing we did. That's something he was born with. And I see generations of kids being born with that kind of understanding and that sort of innate compassion.

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And so, I think at the end of the day, we go there. And as I tell my younger son Noah, who is a little bit of a fatalist—and he's convinced we ain't gonna make it—and I go, “On any day that the world continues to turn and we wake up the next day, and it's a functioning world, you have to know one thing. There's a shit ton more good people on this planet than bad. When that changes, you'll know it.

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But with all the stuff you see, all the negativity, all the anger, the rage, the hate, the violence and everything else, there's a shit ton more good people on this planet working for the light than there are not. And there's the hope.”

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DAVID BENDER:

Can you speak about both of those things? The ability for-is it conservative-liberal anymore? Is that the binary? And what about this new sort of post-truth reality that we're in?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Well, it's true that we now live in a world- and I fear this is only gonna become more challenging... We used to disagree about what the facts meant. Now we just disagree about what the facts are. And because of the ability that technologies that are emerging will have to maliciously alter the truth, to have evidence of a different truth, to make falsehoods a reality,-

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-we can pretty much anticipate it's going to be harder and harder for any groups of people to agree on what a fact is. Which is why, I believe, is part of the reason that we cannot give up on or abandon this notion of outreach towards those who don't agree with us. So in my case, from a progressive to to conservatives.

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20 years ago, when I got together with my conservative friends and we talked politics, we would have an exchange of ideas. Now we say, "Well, just don't talk about politics." We need to talk about politics. I... Again, I anecdotally believe from my experience, there's the conservative stats and figures and news stories that we hear in the media.

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But the media is designed to make money. They want- The media's reporting of this division is intended to excite us, to annoy us, to agitate us, on both sides. That's where the ratings are. That's where the money is. That's where the power and influence is. But anecdotally, when I am talking to conservatives, they're not buying into that, to the extent that the report is.

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I know a ton of conservatives, I don't know a ton of Trumpers. Or I know a ton of conservatives who say, "There were some policies that he was promoting that, I think, have value. His particular technique of enforcing, trying to achieve those goals, I find reprehensible. But I think he was right about A, B, C, and D, and nobody else was talking about that. Nobody had the political gumption to do it."

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And so they may give Trumpism a tip of the hat, but they also turn around and go, [Jason frowns.] They are happy to recite the litany of what's wrong with the man, the administration and the policies. The worst thing we could do right now is for good people to abandon the dialogue, abandon the hope.

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Here's an example of the kind of conversations I have had. Now, granted, they're one-on-one. Nobody has an audience. And sometimes when you have an audience, you have to be performative. But I was talking to a guy, I believe in Colorado, who was chastising me because he thought, as a gun control advocate, I literally wanted to take away his gun. I said, "What do you have? What do you got?" And he's got guns.

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He's got AR-15, he's got handguns, he's got stuff. And I said, "Okay. Why do you want these weapons? What do they do for you? I assume they give you something other than just 'fun to shoot.' I think there's something more to it than that. Tell me what it gives you." And he said, "Look, you don't understand my situation. I live in an area where if anything happens in my home, my



property, my community, I call 911. I have no reasonable expectation of anybody coming to help me for 15 to 30 minutes.

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These are tools from my security. This helps me feel secure in my home, on my property, around my family, and in my community. And I need this thing.” And I go, “Well, I totally get that. I totally understand that. You want to feel safe in your home, your property, your community, and you probably bought those guns legally. You probably understand how they work. You probably keep them in good condition. I’m willing to bet that you have them stored in your home in a way that if you have children, they can’t get to them very readily.

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I’m willing to bet you would not be happy to have the crazy people in your community have equal access to these guns, because that wouldn’t make you feel safe in your home and your property and your community. You may be ready for a gun fight, but you don’t want a gunfight. You don’t wanna have to be constantly thinking about, ‘I’m ready for a gunfight.’ That’s not gonna make you feel safe. But I get you’re a responsible gun owner. You’ve made a very strong case for why you need these tools. I want the same thing. I want to feel safe in my home and with my family and in my community.

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We have a very different situation. Where I live, first of all, there’s a lot more people and potentially a lot more guns. And when there’s a lot of guns and a lot of people and a lot of human behavior, things happen. Accidents happen, little rages happen. Things happen. I do have a reasonable expectation when I dial 911, probably within a few minutes, help will arrive.

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So I have less of a need for this tool. In fact, the more of these in my community, the less safe I am in my home, my property, my community. But you and I want the same thing. We both wanna feel safe in our home and property and community. So why can't we elect people that have the same conversation you and I are having right now? We have the same problem. We want the same result. We need different things to achieve it."

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DAVID BENDER:

And did he hear it?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

You bet he did. You bet he did. Of course he did. Because at the end of the day, what I find is good people kind of want the same things. And it's our circumstances that make us think we need different ends to get there, and sometimes we do need different ends to get there.

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DAVID BENDER:

It's funny you mentioned Colorado, because that's what got you involved, was Aurora, that I remember you first started talking about this.

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JASON ALEXANDER:



Well, that's certainly where the gun thing, I just went, "This is crazy. We're not gonna- We're not addressing any of this? We're not gonna make this..." I mean, between Columbine- Columbine, of course, was the wake up call, I think for anybody in my generation to go, "What's going on?"

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DAVID BENDER:

I want to actually talk about time. Aging, we're all doing it, and one of the things our culture is not terribly good about is venerating our elders, and listening to them. Talk to me. You now have a grandson. As you see this, do you think about mortality? Do you think about what you want to accomplish? How does that inform your thinking about what's ahead for you?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

I've become more jealous of time as I get older, because I know there's less of it. There's nothing left that I need to do, although there's a lot of things I'd like to do. Again, going back to my mom, I find these days more and more opportunity to be of service, to use the mind-boggling and certainly disproportionate blessings that I've been given in my life, and somehow pay it back and pay it forward.

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The only thing I'm greedy of when it comes to time is I want to see things. I want to see my grandson as an adult. I want to know what he thinks, what he chooses to do with his life. I am curious to see my friends through the end and my family through the end, and to be there in any way I can, because we-

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You are correct in that... it's wonderful that there's a motion picture home where these great, wonderful old actors and members of our community can go and be cared for. But more often than not, they go to these places and they're forgotten about. I don't want the people in my life to feel they've been abandoned, to feel they've been- their usefulness is done and nobody cares.

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So I'm jealous for the time to be fit and to be able, and to be here in order to participate in the care that we all need for each other, and then to see what becomes of my sons, my grandson, my community, the world. I'm fascinated to see where this is gonna go. We are on the periphery of something and it could destroy us. It could.

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I'm well aware of that. That our enmity and our diminishing humanity and our abandonment of a certain set of key values that have sustained all of us are being challenged. And we are on the verge of a technology that could easily, if not literally, end humanity, alter humanity in a way that you can't call it human anymore. So there's nothing I can do about it other than talk about it, read about it, think about it, work within it.

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But I am very curious, as to see what's gonna happen. And you just want to- A lot of the time I spend these days is teaching and talking. I think that younger people are actually, for the most part, they're kind of fascinated. But it's not about, tell my story. I'm not a big fan of telling my story. I'm a big fan of going, "Tell me your story and let me see if there's anything I can give you that may help you."

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That's why I do the Q&A. That's why I do the teaching. That's why I do any of this kind of stuff. I could care- My sons once said to me- Julia Louis Dreyfus was getting her star on the Walk of Fame, and she asked me if I would be part of that ceremony. I was thrilled to do it. And I came home and my boys said to me, "Dad, do you have one of those?" I said, "No." They said, "Do you want one?" I said, 'Well, I never really thought about it.' I said, "If they threw it at me. I'd probably take it. But I could take you guys up there and we could walk three blocks, you won't know a single name on that floor. And they're all important people in their day."

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And they were kind of perplexed by that. And I said, "Guys, here's the truth as far as I can tell you. When I'm gone, there's only two people on the planet that I care about if and how they remember me," and I'm looking at both of them, "And the rest of it doesn't matter to me." So none of what I wanna do with the rest of my time is about 'tell my story.' But I'm really interested in hearing yours and seeing if my story can be in-

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What am I? Storyteller. Can my story enlighten, entertain, educate, uplift? If it can, there's a reason to tell my story. Without it, I'm your best audience.

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DAVID BENDER:

Tell me about this sense of spirituality that informs you. How do you see, not through a religious perspective, dogmatically, the spirit that holds us all together and that informs you, what is that?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

So I literally believe- I mean, I know this sounds crazy, this is sort of my own religion. I believe in—when I say I'm not religious, but I'm spiritual—I believe in The Creator. I believe time-space in this universe were created by something perhaps sentient. I do believe that. So what are we doing in it? Learning about it. I believe The Creator couldn't enter into this. They could just create it. Our job is to experience it, report back, and when everything that is knowable about time and space is done, The Creator will create something else.

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So what's our job? We are all pieces of the same soul, the same entity. We are all the same explorers. We all report to the same captain. And that's why I kind of move through this without fear. I do believe if somebody said the universe is gonna end, I go, "That ending is some beginning." If humanity isn't gonna make it, okay. Life on this planet will not end when humanity ends. There will be a lot of life. Life on this planet could actually thrive when humanity ends.

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"AI could be sentient robots and they could take over the world!" Yeah, but you know what those sentient robots are programmed with? Everything humanity created. There's no sentient AI. AI right now- Everybody thinks AI is- I just interviewed a guy about this. AI cannot innovate anything. All it can do is mash up what we put in it. "Oh, I'll take this and this. That's never been meshed together before. Aren't you a genius AI?"

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But AI can write a term paper. It just can't come up with a new idea for a term paper. So I am cautious about it. I'm not worried about it. The human spirit, the human souls, everybody in this room that the camera can't see, in my mind, we all came from the same place, we're all going to the same place, and we do this together. We take this journey together, and some of us are asked to look at it through that window, and some that window, and some through this window, and some through that window. And we do it and we do it and we do it until The Creator goes, "Got it. Let's go pack up and go somewhere else."

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DAVID BENDER:

I've asked this of everyone and I want to ask it of you. What do you listen to that gives you pleasure in music?

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JASON ALEXANDER:

Oh, you know, music- So the reason why I always don't- Somebody goes, "What's your favorite song?" I go, "Well, what am I feeling? Where am I?" There is no- Music is, to me, one of the easiest ways to tell you exactly where you are in your- in any given moment. It is the window into your soul. So if I said to you, "Don't think, stop right now, just close your eyes," some song's gonna come into your head. What is that song? It's gonna tell you a lot about who you are, where you are, in this moment in time, and what you need.

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Do I need to hear The Bangles, Billy Joel, Stephen Sondheim or Rachmaninoff? What I love about music more than anything else, think about how much music there is. There's seven notes. 14, actually, let's say 14 now. 13, 13 notes. No, 12. What am I talking about? 12, 13 notes. Whatever, that's how much of a moron I am right now. But that's all there is.

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Look at how it has been used over and over and over and over and over... Is it infinite? Is music infinite? Is that the voice of God? Is music the voice of God? Because it never stops creating. It never stops. It's one of the most fascinating- It's magic. It's magic. Especially people who are so good that they go, [Jason scats,] and that immediately comes out in their fingers. There's no interpreter. They go, [Jason scats,] I go, what is happening right now?

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It is- And Alzheimer's patients. They don't know who they are, they don't know who you are. They remember the songs. There's something- If I was gonna be a really big philosopher, I'd say the day the—as Don McLean wrote—the day the music dies, humanity dies.

END TC: 00:46:00:00