



like you're someone from a John Grisham novel! [Phil laughs] But seriously, a lot of self-help gurus and time-old doctrine tells us to be selfless and altruistic to ultimately be content and happy. Magic also embodies that spirit of sharing an experience. How did you become interested in magic?

PHIL: I grew up learning card games like Hearts and Bridge from my mom and my great-aunt, so I've always had an interest in cards. Sacramento is the home of the California state fair, and at one of our annual visits to the state fair, I was captivated by the vendors performing magic. My parents bought me a Svengali deck and a few other magic props, and I began learning the tricks of the trade.

In Boston, I was an enthusiastic spectator of street magicians. My interest in card games, magic, and community service merged, and I began studying to become a charity magician.

JAY: And where did the inspiration to gift your magic for free for good causes come from?

PHIL: It was while directing a homeless shelter as a college student in Boston. I started sharing card magic with some of our guests. I even learned a few tricks from people I met at the homeless shelter. Although we were a short-term, emergency shelter --- and thus the relationships were temporary --- the connections I made during those formative years inspired me to share my magic for free in support of charitable causes.

JAY: And you gift all of your performances, not doing any paid magic gigs?

PHIL: Yes, I have never done paid magic work. Like my legal career, all of my work is pro bono. That being said, many of my spectators feel moved to make a contribution, and I always ask them to direct their support to a charitable cause. Often, I specifically perform at non-profit fundraisers, so any donation would naturally go to the host organisation. If I am performing at a birthday party or some other

MAGIC MOMENTS



IN THIS SECOND INSTALMENT LOOKING AT GLOBAL ALTRUISTIC MAGICIANS AND MAGIC PROJECTS WE FIND OUT ABOUT A CHARITABLE MAGICIAN WHO PERFORMS FOR GOOD CAUSES AND NEVER RECEIVES A FEE FOR HIS WORK. EMBODYING THE MAGIC MOMENTS ETHIC, JAY FORTUNE TALKS TO PHIL TELFEYAN FROM WASHINGTON D.C.

JAY: Hey Phil, so for those who've not heard of you, tell us a little about yourself.

PHIL: Thanks Jay. I was born and raised in Sacramento, California. After graduating from our public high school, I went to college and law school at Harvard University, where I was surrounded by people

who had grown up much wealthier than I had. In Boston, I was impacted by the tragic inequality of our society, and I spent my free time volunteering at a local homeless shelter and helping prison inmates study for their G.E.D. (high school equivalency) diplomas. Now, as a lawyer, I have dedicated my career to providing pro bono services to

help those most in need. I am the Executive Director of a small non-profit in Washington, D.C. called Equal Justice Under Law (www.equaljusticeunderlaw.org). We are primarily focused on ending wealth-based discrimination in the criminal justice system.

JAY: That's great work and sounds

occasion, I simply encourage the guests to make a donation to any charity of their choosing.

JAY: That's so refreshing to hear Phil. Usually the debate amongst magicians is who is undercutting who, especially re charity events. In fact, many pro magicians vent at being offered charity events, with the booker expecting them to perform for free. If you could pin-point it, what would you define as the one main reason why you perform for free at good causes?

PHIL: I believe magic is about a sense of wonder and enjoyment that occurs in both the magician and the spectator. Although our daily jobs tend to smash out qualities like wonder and enjoyment, magical experiences are a necessary part of a fully fulfilled life.

JAY: Which goes back to our thoughts on being content.

PHIL: Absolutely. The United States is a country with crushing inequality --- although we are the wealthiest country in the world, thousands of our residents are left to sleep on the sidewalk because they have no place to call home. Whatever small talents I have or contributions I can make, I believe I should share them with those who have been least served by our society. There are so many great non-profits doing good things for people, I felt I could help in a small way by contributing to their efforts.

JAY: How involved are you in your local magic community, or the community at large worldwide?

PHIL: I have several magician friends in Washington, D.C., and I would love to become involved in my local magic community, but I have not been able to do so. One of the main barriers to me is my day job: working at a small non-profit doesn't leave enough time for magic. But I do hope to connect with more magicians as I continue learning the art.

JAY: Just to touch on my previous question, as an altruistic magician, have you encountered any animosity from other magicians about how

you are working for free, and undercutting their market?

PHIL: No, I have never encountered animosity from other magicians. I think in part because my website gets relatively little traffic - even though it is the best webpage in history --- www.charitymagician.org...

JAY: [Laughs] It is actually really cool and tells a lot about your personality. Something many of the expensive all-singing and all-dancing websites I've seen often fail to communicate.

PHIL: Thanks! I doubt I could truly compete with professional magicians. But moreover, I've met magicians who are very supportive and encouraging. Some have offered advice, tips, and even lessons. Although I do not have a lot of experience with the magic community, I feel that it is a very giving and generous group of people.

JAY: Like all human interests, there are groups of magicians doing amazing and inspiring work through

their magic, and others doing not so great stuff! [Laughs]

PHIL: As a civil rights lawyer helping people who are poor, I have plenty of experience with people disagreeing with my values and my chosen path. If I were to experience animosity from another magician, I would not take it personally. I understand that everyone has their own sense of values and is doing their best to live their own vision of a good life. For some, that includes expressing hostility towards people they disagree with. Although I do not believe in anger or hostility myself, I do not take it personally when it is directed at me by others.

JAY: Globally we hear of increasing tensions, especially both here in the UK and USA with often extreme political views, community cohesion and clash of cultures. A pressure on wages is always in the headlines. Do you feel that there is a shift from community and altruistic thinking to more of a selfish 'all about me' mindset that makes it far more difficult to educate and encourage

magicians to try performing for altruistic ventures and projects as opposed to doing it 'just for the money'?

PHIL: As you say, I think there are two camps. For many people, altruistic thinking is becoming more common. I co-founded a non-profit as a still-young lawyer, and many young people are finding themselves drawn towards community service at earlier ages. At the same time, more and more people appear to believe that money, products, consumerism, and income should be the prime motivators in life. As a graduate of Harvard Law School, I saw 95% of my classmates turn away from public interest jobs and take high-paying corporate jobs. So I've seen both camps of people.

JAY: It's certainly interesting. Another altruistic magician George Parker discussed this with me once; he calls it having only Outer Wealth and no Inner Wealth when you're only chasing the money.

PHIL: Yeah, I think that's true.



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JAY: In your own work, have you experienced your magic transcending political and racial stereotypes to bring cohesion at events?

PHIL: Magic is magical. It brings people together in a way like nothing I have ever seen. Different ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds come together and fundamentally experience the same core emotion of wonder. Done well, magic has the ability to inspire people to stop thinking about themselves and lose themselves in joy and intrigue. That's the goal I strive for with all audiences.

JAY: What does the future look like for your charitable work Phil?

PHIL: I hope to keep entertaining

people who love card magic in any context I can. My main barrier is travel, because although I do not accept payment for my services, I do ask that a host organisation pay for travel to get me to their event. Most people looking for magicians are not thinking about charity magic; they're thinking about paying a magician. I hope more groups think about saving money on a magician and directing that same money toward a charitable cause.

JAY: And in inspiring others to act, what would you wish to see from the magic community in this kind of work going forward?

PHIL: I think magicians can do two relatively easy things: (1) they can do some of their magic for free in support of charity, which I know a lot

of magicians already do for causes they feel passionate about, and (2) if an event cannot afford a magician's rates, the magicians can refer the host to a charitable magician, which may very well be more affordable anyway.

JAY: Thanks Phil for sharing your philosophy and ideas. Great to talk with you. For readers who are interested in discovering more about you, where's the best place to look?

PHIL: I must give credit to my agent, Kristina Majewski, for helping design the best webpage in history: www.charitymagician.org. Magicians can best reach me at my non-profit e-mail address: ptelfeyan@equaljusticeunderlaw.org. And for folks who may be passing through Washington, D.C., I always love to

meet in person and share some card tricks.

JAY: So, to finish with a classic question; what is your favourite 'go to' piece of gift magic?

PHIL: As someone who solely performs card magic, my favourite 'go to' magic trick is Design for Laughter (from Royal Road). The name of the trick says it all: magic is about sharing joy between magician and audience. I love the humility and 'mistake' moment built into Design for Laughter, and the heartwarming surprise it delivers at the end.



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