



**Recycling for Charities Web Talk Radio Show Transcript
Eric Ritz**

Dario Chiarini: Thanks for tuning in to another edition of the Recycling for Charities' podcast radio show. Hi, I'm Dwight Zahringer chairman and founder of RecyclingForCharities.com. We're a 501C-3 non-profit organization that allows individuals, organizations, and charities the opportunity to recycle their old cell phones, PDAs, mobile palm pilots, digital cameras, iPods, and iPhones for a value that has been donated to themselves or the charity of their choice. Not only is Recycling for Charities acting as a medium to raise funds for charities, but our organization also helps individuals protect the environment as well. Helping to reserve the environment for generations of the future is an important responsibility for which everyone should be held accountable; unfortunately until recently, legitimate wireless recycling efforts and programs were few and far between. That's why I created RecyclingForCharities.com. It allows every individual to go online, choose the charity of their choice, donate their item, and make sure that charity receives funds, while making sure their donated item is recycled properly to protect the earth. We're committed to recycling all of these products, and we strive to recycling or refurbish as many of the units as we receive.

Each week on the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show, we'll be talking to different individuals who are leaders in keeping the earth green and friendly and helping charities along the way. We'd love to hear from you and hope you enjoy what you hear. Let's keep the earth green and friendly, and make sure you recycle all your old wireless products at RecyclingForCharities.com.

We are just going do a quick intro here. We are here with Eric Ritz, founder of Global Inheritance and executive director of Global Inheritance, based in sunny Los Angeles, California. It was started in 2002 as a 501C-3 non-profit working to empower individuals worldwide to think and act creatively in solving global imbalances. Global Inheritance raises the bar in environmentalism by partnering with big businesses and artists to push for progressive social change. Does that about accurately sum it up?

Eric Ritz: Yep, that's a pretty good job.

Dario Chiarini: *(Laughter)* Okay, great. So just quickly, just give us your sort of vision behind this, how you guys started, because you started in 2002 and you've obviously grown exponentially into

environmental and a couple other things we'll touch on later. So how have you guys been successful? You know, what was the original vision? And how did you get from where you started to where you are today?

Eric Ritz:

I mean, a big part of it was since I've been involved with NGOs, ever since college, it was always kind of a struggle just because I felt like a lot of the NGOs out there, they were more focused on fundraising than actually getting ideas out there to different audiences, and a lot of times the ideas were very one-dimensional. So it was always kind of a struggle just dealing with non-profits, and I always would do concerts or benefits or things of that nature and work with them, and I always worked with great people but I always felt like there was always sort of a struggle in one way or another in trying to get them to open themselves up to new audiences and really be diverse in how they get the message across.

Then I ended up working on a campaign called The Truth, which is American Legacy, and it's an anti-tobacco industry initiative that was launched in 1999 after the tobacco settlement agreement. I worked actually on that campaign from the beginning until about 2003, 2004, and it was great. It was a huge eye-opener, and I feel that American Legacy was one of the first, if not the first, sort of NGO that went out there and really transformed their messages based on the audience and really did a good job of empowering versus guilting and really playing to people's intelligence versus this sort of fire and brimstone, sort of preaching that if they don't do – change something major, it's going to all crumble.

So having seen that, I felt that it would be great to go and take that same approach and philosophy to other issues. I'd always really wanted to start my own non-profit, and I felt that due to technology and the direction that we were going and what you could create on the web, that it was the perfect time because I felt like I was experienced enough, I had enough energy, and with the Web I could be a lot bigger than we were without any sort of funding. So we created the organization, and originally it started as Fashion Piece, and the idea behind Fashion Piece was to have people use their clothing as canvases to express their ideas. Back in 2002 this wasn't --I think it's been kind of done since as far as different brands and other people jumping on the cause bandwagon. But for us back in 2002, we felt it was a great way to communicate ideas and have people take a vested interest in what they believed in. We partnered with all sorts of great brands, everybody from Levis to

Diesel to American Apparel and Puma and all sort of the big names in fashion, and had a lot of success.

Then we started to do events, and one of our first sort of initiatives was a campaign called Trashed, which was short for Trash Education, and that was started actually at Coachella. The reason that we started Trashed is Coachella was had a bad experience with one of the artists and their NGOs and they created sort of a blanket policy that they weren't going to have NGOs at the festival, because they felt that the music should speak on its own and that people shouldn't be pitched or marketed to. That people were there just to have a good time and that the NGOs will have their place and time somewhere else. We went and talked to them and tried to suggest different ideas that we felt that they would respond well to. One of the things that we always felt like was a huge issue is at the end of the – you know, you'd go to this great festival, you have an amazing time, and then once the lights went on and everybody's kind of walking out, you'd be basically covered in this sea of bottles and cans and trash. We just felt like how could such a great, beautiful sort of event and cultural happening have such a negative attribute?

So we suggested redesigning recycling bins and making it more of an activity that people could feel like they're a part of and interact with, and that really sort of took off. We had some amazing artists from here in southern California, a lot of people that were specifically in the fashion business that had designed or design all the shirts for, popular action sport brands. We were able to use these recycling bins as canvases and really kind of push that, and that actually kind of took the organization in a different direction because we went from really kind of being an overall sort of organization strictly focused on promoting activism to really starting to do a lot more in the environmental space. We have kind of stayed there since – not that we don't believe in other social issues. It's just that a lot of our programs have been built around the environment and we feel like there's still some ways to go before we can kind of we feel like it's strong enough that we can go and focus more on other issues, like non-nuclear proliferation.

But the whole sort of ride, I guess you'd say, for Global Inheritance has been sort of interesting because we went from going and being sort of an activist organization to more of an environmental organization, and then all of a sudden this huge wave of green and be green and all this kind of like how you'd say – like, it was all of a sudden hip to be an environmentalist.

Dario Chiarini: Yeah, which actually is an interesting point, because I was going to ask you that. Nowadays green is everywhere and every company, whether they're the biggest conglomerate on down to, eat local movements, everybody wants to be green. You mentioned some really big brands that you guys have partnered with, and I know you guys have worked with some big musical acts. How much of it is people really wanting to do good versus just putting a different coat of paint on the same old house? Some of these big companies, are they really changing their ways? Are they really drilling down vertically to their manufacturing processes to make things greener, or is it just sort of smoke and mirrors?

Eric Ritz: You know what? I'm sure there are some people that have been in there since day one, and then there's people that are there and they feel like they have to do something, otherwise they're gonna look like the bad guy. It's hard to say. I mean, people like to go after the bigger companies because they're an easier target.

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: But you know what? Sweat shops -- all the footwear companies use sweat shops, you know, or were using sweat shops, and that usually is the easiest target to hit because they have the most reach. I think that for us, like working with some of these bigger brands, I mean there's definitely a point where we don't cross, especially with certain brands. I don't want to name names, but we definitely have sort of a process where we have to make sure it's in our best interest as an organization and for the people that support us that, by partnering with a particular company it's not going to hurt us or our fan base or the idea that we're trying to promote.

But saying that, there's the idea of preaching to the choir. You go in there and there's all these brands that have had a sort of environmental, association from day one, which is fantastic. But if you -- by just partnering with those guys you're going to be hitting the same audience over and over, and sort of the idea of preaching to the converted kind of comes into play. So we try to work with brands that have a very strong connection with their audience, that are innovators, that are leaders, that are trying to do the right thing. Then we look at it as, if by partnering with these people we're able to tap into their entire database of individuals that they already reach. And for a lot of people out there being green is being -- it's being a Democrat.

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: And being a treehugger, and that's just with that ideology you're always going to have two teams against each other. And for us we really don't use the word green. We may have a partner like Planet Green where we have to say it on our website or a newsletter, but we really try to avoid it just because we feel like that's already been said and done, and it's just like labels aren't necessarily the best thing. I think in a lot of these things anything environmentally or socially, it's just common sense.

Dario Chiarini: Right, so you transcend sort of the political aspect and like you said, putting it in a box or putting a label on somebody.

Eric Ritz: Yeah, you're better off trying to go – we're – I mean, we're – our whole –there's – I've dealt with some a little bit more radical organizations, and I really think what they do is fantastic. And I've been involved with them and I just don't do it on record or attached to Global Inheritance. If you have 100 people and you have five people that agree and 95 percent that don't really take a position one way or another, you don't really get very far. And you really have to hit that – sort of like that – the middle, not the extreme right, not the extreme left –

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: Those 80 percent of the people that sit in the middle that want to do something, but they just don't want to have a label slapped on them, or they don't want to feel like that they're again, *Inconvenient Truth*. You had Al Gore during the Oscars, who ran for the Democratic presidential nominee, or he was the Democratic presidential nominee. He was the VP of Clinton. And then they're playing song of the year by Melissa Etheridge, who's openly gay, and just like, you're killing any sort of, like, red state support of the environment. Like, you're hitting these taboos where you're making it political, you're making it based on sex, and it's just you're creating – and not that any things are bad, but an issue like the environment, it has – everybody has to feel like they have a connection to it. We're all responsible for this planet, and we have to make it as great of a place as possible, and ideally make it even better when we leave than it was here when we first arrived. I think that people just like to, in the United States especially, they like to take sides.

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: I think when you play too much to one side, the other side feels isolated. So for us, I mean, we almost like think the last project we

put together, the Environmental Project, it's an environmental museum, but we're at a mall. So saying we're an environmental museum at a mall, the people that we're gonna get are the people, it's preaching to the converted. It's those people that are going to go there. We thought it'd be great to call an amusement park and our tagline was, "Nobody Rides for Free," and really kind of play off, this whole thing with – that this can be fun or interesting, and really get people in there. Because, for us, we feel like we're trying to get them to look at it and ideally inspire them to care more or want to be involved or see that it can be done through different angles.

And with our ideas – kind of going back to what I was saying with The Truth – we really work hard at trying to make each program or each campaign different based on the audience that we're targeting. And we do – you know, there are two festivals we work on in Southern California in the spring, and they're – one happens right after the other. And the first one is Coachella, which is sort of a hipster event that takes place for three days. Then the following weekend is a country festival called Stagecoach which is not necessarily a hipster event, but very crowded and very popular nonetheless. We really try to go and adjust ourselves to that audience. They're having a good time and enjoying the programs that we've designed as much or even more than the people at Coachella.

A perfect example that we did one of the programs – and this is kind of like a simple one, but we had a recycled paper airplane toss where you could win a chance to see MIA onstage because she had a song that was popular called "Paper Planes." So we got all the recycled paper from the production offices at the festival, and then people were able to make their planes, and we had different facts, and it's something where it's a very subtle, easy first-step thing into recycling, but it was kind of like the idea of not only recycling, but reusing items, that things have a second life.

And you know, of course, the country audience probably doesn't even know who MIA is, or Mia. I'm sure they're thinking of some sort of war, and Missing In Action. (*Laughter*) So we had instead of having, like, the target a lot more colorful, we did a giant bowl with the different cuts of meat. And then rather than the cuts of meat, like sirloin, we would have, like, an item they could win, like rope, or like a camper, air freshener, backstage passes, or anything like that. And then we had the desert like, Desert Storm Shootout or what we called it exactly, what we called the name again, but it was – again, the idea was it's a different audience, we have to go

and reinvent it so that this audience feels like it has a connection similar to the Coachella audience. Like, they had a connection with what we did with the same program.

And again we do things – we do a water recycling exchange, and for Coachella people are drinking water like it's going out of style, and it works great. People recycle ten bottles of water, you get one for free. At Stagecoach nobody drinks water. They drink Coke or beer, and it's just a fact, and so you have to have a different approach because it's a different audience and they're gonna respond to different things.

Dario Chiarini: Right. All right, for you guys just joined us, we're talking to Eric Ritz, founder of Global Inheritance. And you mentioned environmental, and I did want to touch on that a little bit more, 'cause it's a great concept. But one thing, I know you guys have used artists and musicians to really get your message out there, you know, and you were just talking a little bit about tweaking your message to the audience that you're talking to. If you had to put it in a box, who do you think you guys really speak to the most? Is it, you know, sort of the Millennials, the Gen X, the Gen Y, or are you getting a lot of buy-in from older people that want to make a difference, or even younger people?

Eric Ritz: You know what? I think our audience is people that are open-minded. I mean, and then there's an expression, like youth culture – youth culture isn't based on age, it's based more on lifestyle. You have an active lifestyle, you're constantly trying to learn, and I think ultimately that's our audience. I think people and this saying has no environmental association to it, but they're saying, if you're not green, you're dead, in the sense that with a plan, when you're a live, you're growing. You're evolving. But if you stop growing or you sort of turn brown and shrivel away.

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: And we really go after people that we feel are sponges, that want to learn, that want to create, that want to emulate because ultimately those are the ones that that run the country or the world. Like, they're the ones that are gonna be the leaders – that are the leaders of today or the leaders of tomorrow.

Dario Chiarini: And I don't know how much – you know, obviously California's always been, more progressive in terms of pushing environmental initiatives. We're based in Detroit, smack dab in the Heartland over here.

Eric Ritz: I was actually born in Detroit.

Dario Chiarini: Oh, really?

Eric Ritz: Yes.

Dario Chiarini: Oh, okay. Great. So just – you know, obviously there's a different tone when you move about the country. How far have you guys moved from the West Coast, and what's been the reception, just in general, to the concept?

Eric Ritz: I mean, we've done some events and recycling initiatives in New Orleans, which were before the hurricane, and they were fantastic. I mean, I don't think it's a regional thing. I think how you explain these things – of course they're gonna have a different reaction in one state or one city than another, but you have to just look at the audience. How do you create for NASCAR, it's different than if we're putting something together for, you know, UC Berkeley.

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: You've got to just know your audience; it's that simple. I mean, what we do, I think, very well, is we're an NGO, but we're very good at marketing ideas. And for us activism and anything from recycling to carpooling to alternative energy these are ideas that we're pushing and we're presenting them in new ways. And for us it comes down to the audience. You have to know your audience; otherwise it's a dead end. People either won't want to participate or they won't understand.

Dario Chiarini: Right. And you mentioned different recycling initiatives. I don't know if you had a chance to check out our site. You know, what we do is we recycle e-waste – cell phones, PDAs, digital cameras – and the money that we get from that recycling goes to benefit over 800 charities nationwide. Any specific types of e-waste programs that you guys have run in the past?

Eric Ritz: We've done some stuff with phones. Phone are pretty easy. We've had some recycling days at the Environmental Land for e-waste. It just really varies. I mean, for us, we're trying – we could do – we've done smaller initiatives, but we really want to work on getting and doing it on a larger scale. So we're just active, trying to form partnerships, and try to use some of our relationships to execute some of these ideas and some of these programs on a larger level. I think for us that's we have to sort of play the cards

in our hands, and that's in our eyes, the best way is to look at our relationships that we have and how can we use those to the best of our abilities to have the maximum results. We've been working with music festivals and sporting events for a while now because you have such a huge net of people that you're reaching over a course of a day, two days, three days. And so by really doing a good job of getting them involved in what you're doing, or getting them to do something as simple as – they're gonna recycle their iPod to take the bus, they're going back to their schools, their communities, their offices, and telling their friends –

Dario Chiarini: Right.

Eric Ritz: Their coworkers and telling their fellow students their great experience. And ideally word of mouth is it can't be beat. Like, it's the best form of advertising, and for us all these things that – all these issues that we have in the world, they need rather than feeling like these things are a burden, we need to look at – these are things that we just – there a part of society. Like, they're things that we have to deal with because by being a living creature on this planet these are things that we're responsible for. But they don't need to be depressing. Like, you can find creative, fun ways to address and deal with issues, and that's kind of what we try to do. We try to look at how you can – again, it's not all fun and games, but how can you make it more enjoyable, especially your first experiences with it, so you want to be more a part of it, versus having it be this thing that it's like the dentist's office, like something that you're just not looking forward to or procrastinating over. Like, we want this to be something that people take pride in and have fun doing and feel like it's a part of their lifestyle.

Dario Chiarini: Right. You mentioned earlier that in the beginning technology allowed you guys to be a lot bigger or give you bigger presence than you actually were. How exactly has technology helped you guys grow, and what are you doing, you know, ongoing? And on the website you've got various posts, YouTube, and things like that. But ongoing, how are you guys using technology to help grow the organization?

Eric Ritz: I mean, everybody now is a reporter, where before you had to work for News Corp or one of the big media companies. I mean, everybody has a Flickr account, everybody has a YouTube account, everybody has a blog. I mean, you can document everything you see in life so everybody can report back on what's going on. And so before that it was all printed literature and all

ads and all billboards, and other things that were usually very expensive. And for us, with the internet, we're going after an audience that's tech savvy. And for us e-mail blasts are very important, blogs are very important, Web design is very important. And it's something that – where the Web is a free – good design is good design, but in the Web you can circulate a great image to millions of people, overnight, whereas to get that same kind of reach in more traditional media, it's almost impossible. If you have a bank...

Dario Chiarini: Hefty budgets to move it, yeah.

Eric Ritz: Account full of cash.

Dario Chiarini: Yeah, yeah. Well, we couldn't agree more. We've definitely been able to expand because of our online presence and people finding us through the Web and Google searches, so we definitely couldn't agree with you more on that one.

Kelly Steed: Hey, Eric, this is Kelly. I just had a question about your Recycle Tweets, since you mentioned Twitter. What is that really about, and how did you come up with that idea?

Eric Ritz: It actually wasn't my idea. We had an agency – I think it was in North Carolina – and they – McKinley is the name of the agency. And they reached out to us and they said, "Hey, we've created this app, and do you want to be a part of it? And we heard about you guys from a magazine." And I was like, "Is it gonna cost us anything?" They were like, "No." (*Laughter*) "Sounds great." So I can't take any credit on that – we just kind of were in a fortunate spot to have these people pick us and the beneficiary of the proceeds. And we try – I've been trying to get more on Twitter because of it, but – and that's about it. There's no real sort of sexy story or at least on our side.

Kelly Steed: How does it work, exactly?

Eric Ritz: You basically – so you check a Tweet from your friend and you think it sucks or it's not very cool at all. You can go and you basically cut and paste the Tweet and you add on – by the way, there's, like, a video. If you go to RecycleTweets.com there's a whole video on it, too. But basically you can cut and paste it with a few, you know, backspace and an asterisk and something else, and then you reply to your friend, and then all of a sudden the Tweet's recycled, using the same characters. And so it has fun, interesting sayings and it's just – it's a way to kind of like make it

more – I don't know. I guess it's a friendly reminder to your friend to shape up in regards to their Tweets. *(Laughter)* It's a fun way to just to get involved and have some interaction with Tweets, because a lot of times I think Tweeting is very one-sided. And this provides sort of an active way to have fun with your friends or co-workers or whoever else that you can make it with.

Kelly Steed: Okay.

Dario Chiarini: Great.

Kelly: You touched on earlier a little about Environmental Land. Can you go into more detail about what that is and what people can expect at one of the locations you have?

Eric Ritz: Environmental Land is – oh, it's basically – the idea behind it was we were doing all these programs and different festivals across the country, and we thought it'd be really cool to put all the programs or a lot of the programs or more successful ones under one roof. And because the economy isn't so great right now, there's a lot of sort of retail space that's available at major malls. And we thought it'd be great to a venue where there's already a built-in audience, especially in a mall where it's not necessarily, again, the hippest, most environmentally-conscious group, and create a museum. And we thought about the idea more and more, we thought it'd be cool to have it be a theme park, especially given the fact that right now we're in Los Angeles and there's Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm and Six Flags, and why not Environmental Land? It could be the first ever environmental theme park.

And yeah, we just thought it's one of those things, coming back to marketing. I mean, the theme park angle of it – and again it has elements of it in the sense that you can go to these different attractions and you can accumulate points by scoring well on the Organic Food Challenge or generating power on the Energy Seesaw, or power in the Pearl Jam album, or doing a recycle compost trash, sort of drop-bucket competition, or mini golf. Like, there's are all kind of like fun, interesting things, but the theme park angle of it more was to kind of get people to stop in their tracks and think about it, because theme parks in general probably aren't very sustainable. So we thought by having an environmental theme park it might be kind of preposterous and make people kind of scratch their heads and want to come in, just to see what it was about.

And then from there we felt like once they're inside, then we had them and they'd have a great experience and call their friends, and hopefully learn a lot of new things and be better for it.

Dario Chiarini: Great. So we noticed that you guys just closed up in LA, Environmental Land. You're moving on to Portland. What's the opening date on that, and what else do you guys got in the plans for the near future?

Eric Ritz: We – I'm trying to think. Oh, the future? *(Laughter)* We're actually gonna – we're not shutting down here in LA. We shut down the environmental theme park. It's now currently being held in the X Games warehouse in Compton, and then we're gonna move up to Portland for late spring. We're gonna run the program up in Portland and then still continue to do our events across the country. We're excited about Portland. We feel like LA was a hard market to break into because everyone's so celebrity-obsessed and sort of like jaded because there's so many events and things going on in LA. And with Portland, which is actually where I grew up – even though I was born in Detroit – the people there are dying for something like this. We felt like by going to a market that was more suited towards the concept itself that we'd learn a lot of really great things about what people wanted and didn't want. We feel like it's an easier audience to get them there, but it's a harder audience to impress in Portland, so we're really excited about the challenge of creating something that people are gonna be excited about, and writing good things about, hopefully.

Dario Chiarini: Great. And if people want to get involved or they want to find you, they want an update on events, where should they go?

Eric Ritz: The website's always good, or they can e-mail me at info@GlobalInheritance.org.

Dario Chiarini: Okay, and the website's GlobalInheritance.org.

Eric Ritz: Yep.

Dario Chiarini: Great. Well, Eric – we spoke today with Eric Ritz, founder of Global Inheritance – I want to thank you for your time. This definitely very interesting and hopefully we'll cross paths in the future, and we can push for this mission together.

Eric Ritz: Thanks, guys. Well, hey, thank you for all your time. I really appreciate it, and have a fantastic week, and I hopefully will talk to you soon.

Dario Chiarini: Great, thank you.

Kelly Steed: Thanks.

Eric Ritz: Thank you, too. 'Bye.

Dario Chiarini: I want to thank you for tuning in to another edition of the Recycling for Charities podcast radio show. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions, and are always looking for more content to put here on the actual podcast and on our website. Feel free to go on over there. You can sign up to become a charity, a participating organization, or make a donation yourself as a regular consumer. They are tax deductible since we are a 501C-3 non-profit organization: www.RecyclingForCharities.com. Thank you for listening, be green, and love life.

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