

I'm Santa Ono, the president and vice-chancellor of UBC.

And I'm Margo Young, a professor with UBC's Allard School of Law. The Blue & Goldcast is a monthly podcast where Santa and I meet people leading some of the most innovative and creative work coming out of the University of British Columbia. It's a chance to explore the research that happens here and see the impact that that research has across the campus and out into the world.

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So Margo, thank you so much for becoming part of this podcast. I'm really looking forward to our conversations and also learning from some really wonderful people here in the UBC community. So welcome.

Thank you very much. I'm thrilled to come and do this with you, Santa. I'm looking forward to our partnership on air.

Tell me a little bit about your work. You're new, and the listenership really wants to hear more about who you are and what you work on.

I have now been at the Allard School of Law for over 16 years. I think of myself as being a feminist social justice legal scholar. So my work focused on constitutional law, and in particular, on how the various forms of inequality that are rife in Canadian society do or don't get recognition under our constitutional doctrine. So in terms of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, what does it protect, what can it do to speak to the kinds of, say, women's economic inequality that exists in Canada. I also work on broader social and economic rights, and I'm turning now to work on the issue of housing. As well, I'm active with the David Suzuki Foundation. I'm on their board. I'm also on the board of Justice for Girls, which is a fabulous organization that works with girls and young women who've become involved with the criminal justice system and tries to give them better opportunities and the sorts of chances that so many of the rest of us have in life. So my work is densely involved in law, but I really try to take it out to the streets and into the community.

So actually, today's interview really is [inaudible] because it involves Paul Kershaw. So there's some intellectual overlap between what he does and what you do.

There's a huge amount. And I have to say, at all the things I go to in the community, Paul's usually on the stage. So I just last year chaired a session with Paul as one of the panelists. In fact, I had to tell him he was out of time.

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That's a great segue to introducing our guest for today, Paul Kershaw, who is a professor at the UBC School of Population and Public Health. Paul is also the founder and lead researcher of Generation Squeeze. The work he coordinates at the Generation Squeeze lab or the GenSqueeze lab?

Both are good by me.

Okay. At the GenSqueeze lab provides an analysis that helps to explain why so many younger Canadians are struggling and what can be done to ease their pain. So Paul, I'm going to say in a nutshell to begin with, tell us a bit about Generation Squeeze.

Well, thanks so much for having me. And when I speak off-campus to the general public, I would say that GenSqueeze is a voice. A voice for younger Canadians in politics and the market backed by cutting edge research. But when I'm on campus, I give a more technical answer. And the technical answer is this. GenSqueeze is a ground-breaking UBC community collaboration designed to be a conduit by which we

can bring award-winning evidence into the world of politics so that we can narrow the gap between what scholars know we should be doing to improve the health and well-being of younger generations and what our governments actually prioritize in their budgets. Right now, there's too big a gap between what our governments are doing and what the evidence suggests we should be doing. And so GenSqueeze is designed to narrow that gap.

I love it. Then it's a device that we can foster at the university to help bring facts into policy and politics.

That's absolutely correct. And in many respects, one motivation for GenSqueeze these days is that it's too easy for fiction now to compete with facts. We live in an era of fake news where the spread of ideas is often driven more by the power of the orator, whether that's political power or fame or money, as opposed to the actual evidence underpinning those ideas. And so at GenSqueeze, we're like, "Okay. How do we build a power base in support of evidence?" Because our job is to be neutral about the evidence. But once it's there, we want to work on making an impact in the world.

Well, that's really very cool, Paul. Let me just ask you a question. Who is part of GenSqueeze? Are there 20-year-olds? 30-year-olds? What's the cut-off, and who's your target audience?

For a range of strategic and evidence-based reasons, we define GenSqueeze as Canadians in our 20s, 30s, and into our 40s and the kids that we represent. And we were wanting, in no small part, to capture the generations raising young kids. And now given some of the financial squeezes that we can talk a little bit more about, people are, in BC in particular, delaying having our kids later in our lives. And so you're just as likely to have someone having a preschooler in their 40s as you are to have a teenager. And so we've brought it together for that reason. Plus big numbers help for building a power base in the world of politics, to have all parties want to act on the evidence that suggests we need to do things differently for younger demographic.

So this is what interests me, particularly given that you're actually defining as a generation a span of what we might otherwise consider to be two generations, right? You're going to have the parents and their kids. The parents might be in their late 40s. The kids are in their early 20s. Is that too broad? What are the situations, apart from the fact that people are having children later, someone who's 49 and someone who's 21 might have in common?

Yeah. So at GenSqueeze, we actually are, for people who do generational work, we're combining Gen X and Millennials. So we actually know we're combining two generational cohorts, but they differ from those who are technically our aging population, those who are nearing retirement and those who have already retired, in the following two critical ways: Both Gen Xs and Millennials earn thousands of dollars less for full-time work by comparison with the same age people when they started out as young adults in the mid-70s - those are the Boomers - and housing prices today are markedly, markedly higher today for a Gen X and Millennials by comparison with when Boomers started out as young adults. And those two factors mean, for Gen X and Millennials - even though there's a range of diversity there - hard work doesn't pay off for those demographics in the way that it did for our aging population back in the day. And that is something we're trying to shine a light on. So it was strategic and driven by the evidence to combine those two groups, Xers and Millennials, under an evocative term, Generation Squeeze.

So really, are you talking about simply Boomers and everyone else?

In many respects, yes. No one's ever asked me that question quite that way, but if I was being honest, yes.

So how many people are actually impacted by this are you connecting with? What's the reach of your organization?

Yeah. So right now, our network has over 33,000 supporters, and we have particularly large concentrations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas and in the Metro Vancouver areas, the most expensive urban regions. And that's not a surprise. But we stretch from coast to coast, and we're really proud of that reach. And when I think about what we're doing with these 33,000 folks - and we're going to be growing to 40 and the 50, and hopefully, we can break 6 figures sooner than later - on campus as we often talk about MOOCs-- maybe many of the listeners will know about Massive Open Online Courses. And those are really creative ideas that have unfolded over the last decade or so where, for a moment in time, we're bringing hundreds, if not thousands, of people to a learning situation. Then they learn something, maybe they feel a bit credentialed by it, and they move on. The magic behind GenSqueeze is to say, "Why just attract people for one point in time? Let's have a relationship over years, and let's grow the size of our supporter network to continue to get larger and larger, and with that, a larger power base. And then we can engage people in our award-winning scholarship over time, help them learn about it, and give them opportunities to do something with it."

Who's doing the research with you? So there's a GenSqueeze lab that you're obviously central.

Yeah. So I lead that lab, and we have a range of students who support that lab in the School of Population and Public Health. And we've had a range of colleagues who come from multiple disciplines. Because GenSqueeze has a breadth of material we're trying to focus on. So in the past, I've collaborated a lot with people who do work on childcare and parental leave and early child development. More and more these days, I'm part of a housing collaborative research network that's housed here at SCARP at UBC, our School of Community and Regional Planning. And then we're actually doing increasing amounts of work on the importance of pricing pollution so that we leave at least as much as we inherit and don't continue to really put in jeopardy the climactic conditions that younger generations and future generations require to survive, let alone thrive.

Those are very, very important topics. Can you point to successes, policies that have been impacted by your work?

Yeah. And I think this is actually a really good news UBC story. Over time, and in recent years, GenSqueeze has actually had a substantial impact on public policies at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. One of the ones that I'm most proud of is an historic over billion-dollar investment in childcare in BC that was motivated by something called the \$10 a Day Childcare Plan. And that \$10 a Day Childcare Plan started in the GenSqueeze lab. My colleague, Lynell Anderson, myself over a decade ago-- it took way too long to make it happen. But over that time, we managed to go from routinely having our provincial government say we can't afford it to actually have a provincial government saying, "Yeah, it's time to do this." And that's just one example. On housing affordability, we fundamentally shaped the national housing strategy so that it included young adults to be identified amongst the most vulnerable in our housing markets and made them eligible for billions in new investment. Whereas the first few drafts of the national housing strategy kept excluding young people. We worked to have the first ever tax on empty homes in North America happen in Vancouver so that we could contribute to these homes that were there and available, but not being used, saying, "Hey, let's tax these differently to incentivize

people to put them on the market." And it didn't cost us anything to build these new units, and we can get them out fast. And that's been a positive thing to enhance supply.

I'm not a GenSqueezer, but childcare was a real issue for me with my young child. And it's been a perennial issue for feminists groups, as well. Can you talk a bit about how you nuance what GenSqueeze is about in terms of class differential that's going to impact on who's buying houses or not, gender differences, and racialized individuals are very differently positioned in our marketing society today?

GenSqueeze actually started primarily with a focus on family policy. You should know about me that I was hired at UBC to work in the Human Early Learning Partnership, which is a research institute on campus doing internationally renowned work around child development and making sure all children thrive in healthy societies. And as part of that work, I was brought in there because most of my early training was focused on feminist scholarship and public policy implications of feminist scholarship, and childcare and the division of labor is a key piece there. And I got frustrated that in as early as 1970, really talented scholars and women's organizations had been calling for a national childcare plan. And by the time I was starting late 90s, early 2000s, we hadn't made much progress. And so I was trying to think about what frame might we be able to add to the conversation to compliment it. And oftentimes, I would do radio interviews where people would say, "Why do I need to pay for somebody's childcare? If you can't afford to have kids, just don't have them." So they weren't buying the argument about how this is good for promoting gender equality. They weren't buying the arguments about how this was good for promoting child development. And so I wanted to say, "Hey, you need to understand how the world is so different these days and that, actually, hard work doesn't pay off like it used to because here's the bullet points." A younger demographic goes to school longer to land jobs that pay thousands of dollars less, to face home prices that are hundreds of thousands of dollars. The way people have been adapting to that is by, in particular, having women be the super human of adaptation and stretching to take on more and more breadwinning, but we haven't had men take on increasing amounts of childcare giving. And so GenSqueeze came up with a new deal for families that talked about investments in childcare, better parental leave, reserving some of that time for dads to transform the gender division of labor and generally focus on work/life balance. And so that's how we brought in a real feminist lens.

And thereafter, we do have to really work on the racial diversity issues in Canada. I mean, we're a cultural mosaic. And one of the GenSqueeze tendencies is to do then and now stories. What it's like for a young person today by comparison with either their parents or grandparents. It's interesting when we have newcomers because they'll say, "Hey, when my parents sacrificed so much to come from another country to come to Canada, they didn't have it all that great." And so the way the conversation morphs in that direction is to start talking about, "Well, what were your hopes from your parents when they made so many sacrifices to come to Canada?" And the thing that's so frustrating right now is that Canada's not letting those hopes pay off as much as they used to because in many respects, you could have had much lower earnings back in the day when your parents came and afford housing in ways that are much more challenging to do now.

So Paul, looking to the future, GenSqueeze has had an obvious impact, and you should be proud of what you've done. UBC is proud of what you've done.

Thank you.

So what is frustrating? What would you like to see cleared away, or how could people be more supportive? How could the university be more supportive so you could be more impactful?

That's a really great question. Well, first, I want to suggest that the most recent strategic plan at UBC is taking a really important step toward being more supportive. If you think about how we define research excellence and the way that we want to promote that at UBC, it is about the production of knowledge and its mobilization for impact. We don't say it's one or the other. We've combined them. And so I view that as actually encouraging, emboldening, empowering, if not obliging faculty members to increasingly think about our job has these two components: to produce award-winning knowledge and then not be neutral about whether people act on it. So that's, I think, a great step. If you wanted to know the biggest thing we could do at the university, though, people respond to incentives. And on campus, you can get tenure and promotion by doing excellent traditional research that you publish in a peer review journal. We also now have a trajectory towards a promotion and tenure for being excellence in the scholarship of teaching. Our strategic plan suggests we ought to have simultaneously a pathway towards promotion and tenure for those who are fabulous at mobilizing knowledge. If we had that, I think we would incentivize and transform how a younger group of faculty members and a group of faculty members with more experience use their time and allocate accordingly.

Well, that's a great suggestion, and I'll talk about that with the provost and the deans, and maybe you and I can have a conversation in the very near future to talk about how to mobilize that. Thank you for that suggestion.

So Paul, you've talked really powerfully about being a researcher in the university, and I think that's a really interesting conversation. And you talked about what the university could become even more so than it is as a leader of community change and the kinds of social change we need. I'm interested in your theory of change and how that gets expressed in Generation Squeeze.

Yeah. So Generation Squeeze looks for examples in Canada where Canadians have done great things to improve the lot of those most vulnerable. And so oftentimes, I look for examples of when have we reduced poverty in this country. And actually, Canada has a really lousy tradition of actually bringing poverty rates down by comparison with the international arena. But we have one great example, and that happens to be with regards to lowering low-income rates for seniors. In the mid-1970s, seniors had the highest rates of low income in this country. They were too likely to go bankrupt when they wound up sick at a hospital, and they were too unlikely to be able to stretch their income into retirement after a career, especially a career of caregiving. It was disproportionately women who had careers as caregivers at home that didn't have pensions to draw on who were struggling with high low income rates. But if you flash forward to today and you look at stats and measures of low income rates that can go back four decades, seniors report the lowest rates of low income on those measures these days. And I think that represents one of the greatest social policy success stories Canada's ever had, and I want us to replicate it. But I think we need to understand why did it happen. It didn't happen because we had an anti-poverty strategy for seniors. It happened because we built up a couple of population-level universal programs for the most part that catered in many respects to the needs of the broad majority. So the broad majority was counting on the healthcare system that we were building. The broad majority was counting on the old age security system that we were building. And they said, "Hey, I want this to make a difference to my middle class wallet." But the moment you started to make benefits make a difference to that middle class wallet, it was at a generosity level that was starting to float the boats of those who were more income-marginalized. And on top

of that, we created political will to sustain these things over time, so much so that we could build a guaranteed income supplement into this broader universal policy that was targeting those with the lowest incomes.

For me, that's magic. And so GenSqueeze says, "We need to replicate that kind of strategy to big social policy change. How do we harness the power of the broad majority in any generational cohort?" In support of fixing housing, investing in childcare, tackling climate change, getting parental leave better, wondering why post-secondary doesn't get investments like other things. We get the broad majority lending its weight to that, we can make sure we design the details to be attentive to the barriers of those most marginalized and sustain political will to address those barriers, along with the broader population needs. That's the GenSqueeze theory of change.

Very interesting.

Paul, I have a question. In terms of other institutions, faculty members at other institutions other than UBC, are you getting people that are excited, that are taking the information that you're gathering and using that to try to change policy in other provinces?

Absolutely. And one of the things I'm proud of is although we're based here in British Columbia - we're perceived to be based here because I'm here and the other colleagues who actually are working on this full-time are in British Columbia - we're Pan-Canadian. And we've had some of our greatest impacts, actually, in Ontario. I'm proud that also faculty members from universities across the country increasingly see this mechanism that we've built as a tool that they can contribute their research to, to flesh out what are the housing policy solutions? What do we need to do around family policy? What do we do around climate? And then feed that into this mechanism that we've built to add power to the evidence. And I'll give you one concrete example. One of the things I'm most proud of these days is in this past year, two provincial governments had challenged the constitutionality of pricing pollution in the courts. And so GenSqueeze said, "Okay. We know that climate change is perhaps the greatest risk to human health in the 21st century, disproportionately impacting a younger demographic and future generations. We're precisely the kind of organization that needs to lend weight to that." And so we've brought our person power actually into the courts to be interveners in those two court cases in hopes it will shape the jurisprudence to actually recognize intergenerational responsibilities regarding the environment. And that's actually drawing disproportionately in other people's research as opposed to my own.

Interesting. I want to touch down on an issue that's near and dear to everybody in Vancouver, and that's housing. And so I know you've spoken a lot about housing and the impact on the individuals in the Generation Squeeze. Can you tell us a bit about your research in that area, the sort of programs that you might propose? You've already talked about the empty homes tax, but maybe play us out in terms of a few more details about what your lab is finding and what you're recommending.

Yeah. So let me give you data about the scale of the problem. When my mom started as a young woman in this region more than four decades ago now, the typical 25 to 34-year-old had to work about five years of full-time work to save a 20% down payment on an averaged price home in this city, province, and country. If you flash forward to today, here are what the metrics are. The typical young adult would need to work 13 years of full-time work to save that same 20% down payment on an averaged price home across the country. 15 in Ontario, 19 in beautiful British Columbia, 21 in the GTA, and a remarkable 29 years in Metro Vancouver. You'd have to start saving in childcare, except childcare still costs another rent or mortgage size

payment right now. So that's the context in which we operate. Given these changes, we know that home ownership is increasingly going to be out of reach for large segments of a younger demographic and newcomers to the region. And that's not necessarily a horrible thing. Think about a range of cool cities around the planet that are organized around renting. So we can make that happen, too.

But we have launched at GenSqueeze something we call our We Rent campaign to help level the playing field, both culturally and in terms of public policy investments to support renters. But more generally, the bucket of policy solutions that we need are the following: We need to dial up the right kinds of supply. It's going to be increasingly rental and have enough bedrooms for people to have kids. It's going to be dialing down harmful kinds of demand. Think about people who purchase homes and leave them empty or purchase them to rent them out to short-term vacationers rather than people who work or study. It's going to be leveling our taxation. Right now, we tax earnings quite a lot, and we actually shelter housing wealth from taxation in ways we shelter almost no other asset. And we also need to scale up permanently affordable housing in innovative ways including through land banks and public land. That's sort of my Coles Note version of the broad policy levers we need to pull. And we work at GenSqueeze and with colleagues all throughout this university, and especially Ontario and Quebec as well, to see those changes come to fruition.

So Paul, I think Generation Squeeze and Conversation Canada are two key examples of really addressing the fake news phenomenon. And it really involves our faculty members and our students in really making sure that there's integrity in the news that gets out there. In the case of Conversation Canada, a number of newspapers and television programs are actually picking up on scholarship from faculty members that naturally wouldn't be there in their programming. Can you tell us a little bit about Generation Squeeze and how newspapers that you might not regularly think would be picking up on your message have picked up on that and how other parts of society are actually hearing your message beyond your own direct advocacy?

Yeah, absolutely. GenSqueeze started around 2011. That was our first iteration for this machine to try and be a conduit for knowledge into public policy change. And back in the day, we needed to hustle to try and earn the media's attention for the facts to be able to compete with more fiction. Have to say, for a range of reasons now, we need to hustle to keep up with the media interest, which I find really satisfying. But that reflects the following insight, that knowledge mobilization isn't just a one-off press release or a one-off synthesis for a lay audience off campus. It's a commitment to wanting to curate a conversation about the answers we gave to our last best questions before we move on to simply say, "Hey, this next question's super important to me." And I think that that's been some of the secret sauce to GenSqueeze where we've said we don't simply want our work to get dusty on the shelf. We will devote time to curating a conversation with the public via a range of distribution channels. And the media's a really important piece of that. But simultaneously, we need to give reason for media to want to talk about our evidence. Sometimes that's just because we make ourselves available, and we're easy to use and we've demonstrated we have a strong capacity to distill complex ideas in relatively straightforward ways. Other things are we know when the media's most going to want to have material. They're going to want to know things about the budget when the budget's available. So we can't go analyze the budget three months later. You need to be in the budget lock-up the day of the budget so you can get them the material and the time they need.

Similarly for elections. So we've really organized in my lab and in the community collaboration that is GenSqueeze, responding to the time rhythms that the users of the information need as opposed to the time of them so much at the university.

Sometimes that's a pain on campus, but it's really critical for facilitating those who have the chance to shine a light on facts to do so as opposed to it's just easier to draw on the fictions we find online. I think what's become so important, though, in terms of curating the conversation with the general public from the standpoint of a researcher at a university is sometimes the information that the general public and the media needs isn't the most complicated regression analysis or the most complicated qualitative research study. They kind of need some really good basic descriptive work. And suddenly, we're talking about people's actual lives in ways that are, dare I say, sexy to the media. Now I could not publish that stuff in the best peer review journals. They don't care about that descriptive data as much. But that descriptive data allows us to continue monitoring how some key issues are playing out over time. And when we do that, we can keep bringing the same peer reviewed evidence we had previously back into the conversation and cite it and then hook to what's happening currently. And that's been a part of the strategy for our knowledge translation, and our lab at GenSqueeze is really devoted to doing cutting edge work that we're going to publish in the peer reviewed literature. But that's going to go hand in hand with stuff we purposely design to go into reports geared towards the public that allow us new and ongoing opportunities to keep drawing attention to what the academy's already showing.

So you mentioned how important it is to bring real people and personal stories. What's your personal story as the originator of Generation Squeeze? How did you come to this? You took a different trajectory than you originally had when you came to UBC, and you're really worked hard at articulating a very impressive program. Tell us a bit about what about you is in this.

So we've touched on a few of the things. I really started to get alarmed some years ago when trust in academics as experts, in my view, started to wane. And so I was trying to get a sense of those who are viewed in more trusting ways or had reach. What are they doing, and how can we learn from them? I never thought I was going to study housing. And this didn't make me study housing, but I remember when I landed my job here at UBC. And I'm like, "Okay. Well, I guess we should think about making a home here now." And I went, "What can you get for half a million dollars around UBC?" Half a million dollars was more money than my mom had ever spent on all three homes she'd ever have before. I'm like, "It should buy a castle." And it didn't. And that started, I just think, in my own personal-- like, "What's going on here? I have a lot of education. I'm privileged. I've now got a great job with tons of security. And yet, my experience of trying to make a home is different from my mom who often was a single mom, made tons of sacrifices, and was in that kind of category that would be especially vulnerable. She had a home back in the day in West Van." And so those were sort of eye-opening moments for me, like, "This is happening to me with lots of privilege. What's going on more generally?"

And that's happening to you here at UBC, and UBC can do much more in terms of housing affordability. And we are committed to doing that. But we also have levers that we can pull that other institutions and other less privileged, I'll say it very clearly, institutions in this city don't have access to like land and programs to provide low-interest loans to some of the faculty and to think about shared equity, those sorts of things. So if you're feeling that at UBC-

Isn't it amazing?

-imagine what someone else would be feeling at some other institution or some smaller organization.

The one thing that engages me around this question of housing, and in particular, this idea that the course of adulthood involves getting a home and owning it. And you

were sort of describing how you thought, "Well, I've got a job now. The next thing that comes along is owning a home." And that didn't--

Yeah. I was part of that cultural mill.

Right. So we had this cultural norm. But when I think about Generation Squeeze and this idea that young adults these days aren't being given the world their parents experienced, and yet we know that world was unsustainable, what do you say about that larger issue? So these are the generations surely that have to do a better job, that can't point to the past as what they need to get. They need to point to a new future.

I think you're bang on. So in our work, about how to mobilize people to engage in change, one of the starting points, in our observation, is people are more likely to engage when something's going on in the economy that is impacting them. And so I think at this moment, though, as we take from this challenge of how hard work isn't paying off like it used to, there are some silver linings. It's making us have to adapt now with a greater degree of urgency. So a younger demographic is increasingly living smaller, living with more density. They often, for some reasons due to cost, don't own their own vehicles, and they're more committed to public transit. These are things that contribute to sustainability and wouldn't probably have happened as much had hard work still paid off in the way that it did back in the day. But when we use those challenges to prime us to start making important adaptations, we still need to acknowledge that a lot of the hard work and a lot of the difficulty of the adaptation is falling to a younger demographic. Whereas, too often in our society, we'd like to discount a younger demographic as being whiny, lazy, entitled, and drinking too many lattes and too much avocado toast. And that drives me just crazy because it delegitimizes and disempowers a younger voice from actually saying, "No. To some degree, we're being left a relatively big generational debt, and it's falling on us to figure out how to fix it. And it's harder to fix when we earn less and face way higher home prices."

You're absolutely right. I think individuals in older generations can really learn from the example of Generation Squeeze and individuals that are following you and that you are studying, so to speak. So absolutely right. You have a right to be upset, and I think we can learn a lot from the younger generation. Absolutely. I have a question for you. That is we talked a little bit about the role that Generation Squeeze has on mainstream media and how they've been really queuing up to present your information and your findings. Tell me about how you have been embraced by your peers in your department and elsewhere in the university. We talked a little bit about what UBC can do in terms of policy, in terms of promotion and tenure. That's only part of the solution to empowering individuals that are focused on knowledge mobilization to really having an impact. So we also have to deal with the perceptions of other faculty members on what you do. And where are we with that?

I think we're in a solid place in some way, but it's a complex conversation. And it's not just about our particular campus. I think this is about the academy more generally. I think in the academy, there's been a professional expectation that neutrality about the evidence implies we should also be neutral about whether people act on the evidence. So in other words, it is a professional responsibility of everyone around this table to say like, "Here's where the evidence going. It may not be popular. I may not like it. But that's what the evidence is, and it's my job to make you aware of what the evidence is telling us regardless of how popular it is." But once we know the data, I don't think we need to be neutral about whether or not we actually hope it gets acted on and that it actually makes a difference in our community. But my sense is that in the academy still, the moment one becomes not neutral about whether people act on the data, suddenly you're perceived to be not neutral about the data. And I think this

is a key thing that we need to make a really important, but precise, distinction about. Because we have big problems facing us, perhaps no more so than climate change. If many fabulous scientists are right, we have less than a dozen years to fend off changes in our climate from which we may not be able to backtrack for a millennia, if not longer. This puts a huge amount of pressure and risk before those who want to be here in 2030 and beyond. I don't think we should be neutral about acting on that evidence. I think we have an obligation, especially at universities because the media now has a business model that doesn't make it financially viable for reporters to have a beat. And in the absence of people to continually focus on a single issue over time and to draw our public's attention to that over time via the media, there's not many institutions that could do that other than the university.

There, for the longest time - and there's still vestiges of this - been the sense that pure research is what is the [inaudible] of the university and that an applied offshoot or applied feel is somehow inferior or less noble. I mean, you can see that in the physical sciences if you look at mathematics and then look at engineering. And so it's something like that. And that's what I was getting at. Where are we in the academy-- hopefully, there is culture change going on. Hopefully, there is an embracing of the importance of knowledge mobilization.

And I think maybe this is a good place to wrap up our conversation with you, Paul, which has really been fantastic. We've come back to the university after going quite broadly afield from the university with the work that you do and the change that you see in policy, in law, and in politics. But I also think ending it with the topic of climate change is also significant because I know you're talking more and more about environmentalism and environmental justice. And given the urgency of that issue, as you have articulated, it may be that this becomes a real focus of Generation Squeeze because of the urgency and the immediacy.

Our team had always expected to weave into the conversation sustainability. First, our strategy was get people interested in their pockets. Have them trust us about what we're saying about promoting affordability in their day-to-day lives, and then we can steer them over to a conversation about the environment. We don't have any time to delay that any longer. And so we decided to jump in in a big way this past Fall.

Well, we look forward to hearing more from you and from Generation Squeeze on that and on other topics. And thank you so much for really fascinating, engaging, and important conversation.

Thank you very much, Paul.

Thanks for having me. And if people want to see more about GenSqueeze, go to GenSqueeze.za.

[music]

I'm Santa Ono.

And I'm Margo Young.

You're listening to the Blue & Goldcast on CITR 101.9FM, UBC's campus radio station. Back in one minute.

Hello. You've reached the voicemail box of the Blue & Goldcast. If you're an artist or musician at UBC, we're keen to hear about your work. Wait for the beep, and then tell us about what you do.

Hi, my name is Jacob. I make music under the name, Traffic. I make hip hop music. I write the lyrics. I create most of the beats, and I also produce instrumentals.

[music]

I've always been a fan of jazz, and my parents used to play it a lot around the house when I was young. I've always been around that style of music. First and foremost, I've always been a person who's interested in writing, and hip hop drew me in because of that, because the lyrics are such a central focus in that style.

[music]

UBC was where I did my first performance. It was actually a blank final project, open mic night at the old Norm Theatre. And I never performed before that. I was quite shy and withdrawn, and it was just really cool for me to be able to go up and express myself artistically. Because I've always been artistic, and I've always done it in private. But I never had an outlet like that, so it felt really freeing. Going to UBC in general, I feel like being exposed to all these different opportunities and ideas and people really gave me the confidence to pursue music on a larger scale.

[music]

Find a Way is a song that I made a year or so ago. The song is mainly about trying to discover your passion and purpose and working towards that and trying to have a good perspective towards it. And it's just kind of trying to uplift the listener, trying to inspire people to, yeah, continue following what they love to do. And that's Find a Way. Yeah.

[music]

I'm working on a new EP. It should be out in early March. Working on a couple of collaborative projects with my friends. I'm trying to collaborate more and produce more for people and give them my instrumentals to empower them to say things with them and do things with them.

[music]

Okay. Bye.

[music]

Well, Santa, this is my first podcast. And I have to say I am so excited about what's to come, and I found it really fascinating to hear from Paul.

I am very, very excited about this conversation and looking forward to future ones. And I know that we've already been thinking about future possible topics, and they're going to be all over the map in terms of the important questions not only in the academy, but also in the world.

The researchers we have here, the people doing intellectual and creative work are phenomenal. And we are really going to work hard to engage with these people for our listeners.

I'd say one of the things that's very special about UBC isn't just the depth and breadth of disciplinary strength, but the connections that are occurring in increasing frequency between faculty members in different faculties in different disciplines. Really looking at the grand challenges such as climate change and the threat to biodiversity, thinking about the evolution of cities and how we have to build more sustainable cities. UBC is a place that's recognized for those kinds of dialogues, and I think Blue & Goldcast will be a place that we can put a shining light on some of those emerging conversations.

Yeah. And our episode today with Paul really illustrates those trends that you're talking about. So for example, I'm in the law faculty. Paul's in a completely different

faculty, and we often end up on the same stage or working on the same issues. Paul himself is a great example of interdisciplinary work, but most importantly, Paul has really shown us how critically engaged our scholars are with the community and with larger goals of making the world a better place.

That does it for the April edition of the Blue & Goldcast. You can find links to our guests' work, as well as previous editions of this show at blueandgoldcast.com.

If you have a topic you'd like us to cover, an artist you'd like us to feature, or if you want to ask either of us a question, you can send us an email at blue-n-goldcast@ubc.ca or Tweet us. I'm at MargoYoung3, and you can find Santa at UBCprez.

You can also subscribe to the Blue & Goldcast on Stitcher, Apple Music, or iTunes by searching Blue & Goldcast. While you're there, give our show a rating - a good one, I hope - and a review. It helps more people discover the show.

We're back with a new episode next month.

You have been listening to a [inaudible] production. I am now more excitedly [inaudible].

Do you know I'm an activist?

I didn't.

Yeah. I worked with Ralph Nadar.

Did you?

Yeah, yeah. The Clean Water Act.

Really? I didn't know that.

I'm a hippie. Did you see that [laughter]?

Well, I know it now.

Now you know.