**Gloria Schultz:** You are listening to the PYD Lab. (Music plays)

The podcast for implementers and young leaders, who want to examine innovative approaches to Positive Youth Development and hear stories of young people leading change in their communities.

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**Natasha Zena:** Hey it’s Natasha and you’re in the PYD Lab.

Well welcome to today's episode today we're in the lab with Scott Warren.

Scott, welcome.

**Scott Warren:** Thanks for-for having me. Thrilled to be here.

**Natasha Zena:** So, Scott is a visiting fellow at the SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University.

It's a new institute focused on strengthening global democracy through powerful civic engagement and informed inclusive dialogue.

And I saw that you know, you've done tons of stuff in social entrepreneurship what led you to accept this current fellowship?

**Scott Warren:** Essentially my entire career have been running this organization called Generation Citizen, which is all about empowering young people to be active and engaged citizens through getting civics education back into the classroom, and just wanted the organization to be you know sustainable beyond um beyond me as well.

But you know the institute, the SNF Agora Institute, um I think is-is doing really interesting things and allowed me to-to continue to think about um different types of democracy initiatives as well.

And I guess I should start actually the-the reason that I care so much about democracy is um I grew up all around the world my dad was in the State Department in the foreign service and so I grew up throughout Latin America and East Africa and was able to see both the power of democracy in action and the fragility of it is something that needs to be constantly cultivated and molded and improved upon over time.

**Natasha Zena:** So, tell us about the work that you're doing right now at Democracy Moves.

**Scott Warren:** So one of the-the initiatives that I’ve helped to start at SNF Agora is this organization called Democracy Moves. And so, you know, my work with Generation Citizen was, was much more domestic-focused but I maintain this interest in in what makes international democracies tick, um and-and help start Democracy Moves really because of those same sentiments of the-the power and fragility of democracy but recognizing that this moment in time is one in which democracy really is at risk.

In the United States and across the world you've seen, you know, rise in authoritarian countries, you've seen countries that that have really impeded on civic spaces across the world, and at the same time you're seeing young people throughout the world really rising up and pushing for freer and fairer societies and pushing for democracy.

And so, Democracy Moves is really trying to connect young people across the world that are pushing for democratic change.

And really trying to do three things: one is to-to connect young people across borders and so they can learn from each other um and have solidarity in their in their constant fights.

The second is to-to provide capacity building and training and so we do supports around fundraising and media and we do microgrants and so how can we really support young people in organizations.

And the third thing that we're trying to do is to aggregate and think about best practices. And so, that has included building up a scholars’ network of academics that are focused on youth activism, that's included publishing some-some case studies on things like labor rights and youth movements.

Or what can we really learn from the best practices that are happening in youth activism as well.

**Natasha Zena:** Obviously, historically it seems like young people have always been at the forefront of change and social justice movements.

With the young people that you're working with so what are some of the things that you know you see that they're talking about or challenges that they're facing?

**Scott Warren:** Every time we do see change, I think it's the idealism of young people that you know are-are pushing forward to a better democracy in society better than the one that generations above them have envisioned.

Um and also their reverence to some extent to-to not accept anything less than what they should you know what they should see in terms of democracy as well.

And so it's really, I mean one of the powers to this network is the differences that you see in terms of countries and communities, but also the similarities at the same time. They continue to push for democracy and haven't seen it before. You know there are countries that I think are a little bit more promising um and so a lot of in these in these countries they're trying to figure out how do we really mobilize young people, how do we mobilize communities.

**Natasha Zena:** How do you keep some of those youth, particularly those who are part of marginalized groups, right? So the ones who feel like you know what ‘This system wasn't designed for me they don't have my best interest in mind.’

How do you help them restore their faith in democracy?

**Scott Warren:** I-I think a few things, um one you know I think one of the-the powers and challenges of democracy is that whenever change happens it just takes a long time, but you can point to a number of different places where um you have had you know you do see change happen.

And so um but you have young people specifically that are incredibly creative in the in the ways to affect change that are using art and-and protest art as a way to um you know demonstrate that they're frustrated with the-the government that are um you know increasingly gathering online and using those spaces to demonstrate some of the um corruption and crackdown that are that are happening.

Um so I think you're seeing a lot of creativity especially from-from the younger generation um and then the other thing that I think you really are seeing is um that I mean that-that I think can-can lead to power is-is when groups connect with each other and the opportunity for them to learn from each other um and for them to see ‘Oh, we're having a lot of challenges in our activism but so are you know these-these other organizations from a different country.’

There's power there, there's power in the solidarity. And so I think especially when young people um you know are unable to sort of see the path forward, being able to-to have that common bond with others I think is-is really-really important as well.

**Natasha Zena:** A moment ago you were just talking about you know how these youth are being creative and they're using outlets like art because a part of the work that you're also doing at Democracy Moves is encouraging them to get involved in a non-violent way, correct?

Can you talk a little bit about that for those who are living you know in areas that may be war-torn um or where there's actual physical violence happening around them?

**Scott Warren:** Yeah. So, um I mean we we've partnered with places like the Institute for Nonviolence and actually talked about what is non-violent activism look like right?

Um and uh and how do you actually mobilize you know young people in the in the face and some-some of our activists have faced we've talked about it they've seen ways to engage, ways to get media around it, ways to think about coalition buildings so-so really building up the institutional support from across communities as well.

But I think one of the things to demonstrate and we look at the works of folks like King and Gandhi um you know this is just the way that effective activism has-has happened is through non-violence and so um it's, it's challenging and-and it takes time but um is-is really important as well.

**Natasha Zena:** Engaging them is important. One of my pet peeves is that I always worry about youth being taken advantage of.

What would be some of your advice because even now you're talking about, you know, working with some of these organizations and helping them build capacity right?

To be able to serve some of these youth in a way that's meaningful and not taking advantage of them.

What is some advice you would have for engaging them?

**Scott Warren:** I-I think in these kinds, I mean for, for us it really is seeing young people as leaders that have specific knowledge to bear that-that can be helpful right?

Um and so it's not just as like plug into this system so that you can make it better but what specifically are you learning about the situation in a place like Burkina Faso that you can bring to bear that will provide helpful knowledge.

And so some of it is the you know the groups in our, in our network and we have you know over 50 organizations from across the world are all led by young people.

Um, I mean we-we sort of define young people as 18 to 30 and they're all engaging with each other as young people right? And so we're not working with sort of uh older people that are running organizations for young people which is maybe one of the reasons I transitioned from Generation Citizen as I got older so I stopped being a young person running an organization for young people but I think that that's one of the things, right?

You know you're so right and that so often I think we think about how are we educating young people um I mean to be active citizens, to be the leaders of tomorrow, rather than asking what do you think about what's happening right now. Um and so that's what we're you know trying to do is to is to build power um and inspiration so that they can they can actually leap now.

Um and it from a capacity building perspective I mean one of the hardest things is fundraising and, and just these groups having enough resources to do it so we're trying to help there but I do think that that's, that's just a really hard thing to think about, is that um you know and I saw this as a young person running organization too but it is really hard to for them to get some of the you know sort of support they need from uh from a fundraising perspective as well.

**Natasha Zena:** I know this month uh um YouthLead is partnering with Democracy Moves on the Fair Equal Just Campaign that we're running. With the work that um Democracy Moves is doing, what are some of the things that you guys offer?

We know that you offer obviously a powerful network for people to connect um but my understanding is that you also offer you know webinars and trainings and you know virtual meetups and stuff could you talk a little bit about that?

**Scott Warren:** Yeah so I-I mean, I think what we're I mean, we're so excited to be partnering um with, with Youth Lead on it.

What we offer is really along the lines of the three initiatives that I’ve talked about so: connecting young people, providing training, um and the, the best practices as well.

So on those lines, on the connecting, we have a very active WhatsApp group with activists from across the country that are sharing new stories of what's happening in Uganda or what's happening in Venezuela and you know hundreds of young people that are really sharing constantly.

We have a Spanish network and an English network and, and we help young people connect with each other one-on-one um so provide some mentorship opportunities as well um and so that that process of, of really learning from each other in real time I think one of the values of technology right now is that it's so easy for young people to, to learn across, across borders.

Um from uh you know from a webinar perspective and we have all these still on, we've done fundraising trainings, we've done digital media trainings, we've done traditional media trainings, we've also done some intensive sort of country deep dives.

And so talking about what's happening in Nigeria with the END-SARS campaign, talking about what's happening in Uganda with-with the recent election and-and Museveni, talking about what's happening in Myanmar um and-and the crack down there.

And so we have frequent sessions where um you know we'll have the opportunity to talk about what's happening in Myanmar and some of the um you know the the cross learnings with um you know post-colonialism efforts in in places like Kenya and East Africa.

Um and then the third thing in terms of best practices you know we do have these case studies out there and we're also just launching a new request for proposals um for an online journal that's going to be focused specifically on best practices of international youth activism.

And so it's an online journal, a partnership with an organization called The Forge, which is out of The Center for Popular Democracy in the U.S., um and so we're going to be asking for uh proposals from anyone from around the world that’s explicitly not the U.S. from anywhere from around the world from activists that feel like their specific form of activism can-can teach something to other organizers and activists from around the world.

So-so we're just launching that. So there's the opportunity to learn from others, to learn best practices and to um you know to publish your work as well.

**Natasha Zena:** That's pretty cool. Where can folks go to learn a little bit more about the journal?

**Scott Warren:** So we're going to post all that on [democracymoves.org](https://democracymoves.org) which is our website and our-our social media links um [democracy\_moves](https://twitter.com/democracy_moves) for Twitter.

We'll we'll have those links as well but [democracymoves.org](https://democracymoves.org) you can um you know you can sign up there and you can apply for the for the journal as well.

**Natasha Zena:** Wow. I could talk to you about this stuff forever. I know we don't have forever um—

**Scott Warren:** No I appreciate the-the questions they're, they're super great for sure.

**Natasha Zena:** Um but this has been really good. Uh every guest that we have on the show so far we always ask them to come with three PYD recommendations.

The ‘P’ standing for “Published,” the ‘Y’ for “Youth,” and the ‘D’ for “Disrupt.”

I'll ask you your first recommendation for a published source. It could be a book, an article, a report and why.

**Scott Warren:** Yeah, so I’ll be a little selfish here. Um but-but I wrote a book on youth activism that came out about two years ago called *Generation Citizen: The Power of Youth in our Politics.*

And so, I the-the reason that I say this is the-the book is all about what we were talking about before on how young people throughout history you know have always been the disruptors, have always pushed for change, and has stories um but from the United States and around the world of how young people have pushed for-for change.

While I wrote it-it very much is the story of activists throughout the U.S. and activists throughout the world that have pushed for change um you know largely and against some of what we were talking about before.

Against oppression, against um insurmountable odds and so um that's something that you know it's just been-been a really powerful lesson to-to be a part of uh as well.

**Natasha Zena:** Wow um youth. The second is youth. A resource or project you know of, have authored or led, uh by a young leader that you want others to know about.

**Scott Warren:** I-I just wanted to highlight a specific organization in Democracy Moves and so this is uh it's a group called All For Social Justice and they work in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

And the DRC is, has been a place with-with a lot of challenges um and not much democracy but-but All For Social Justice works in a place called Lubumbashi uh in the DRC.

Um and really does you know comprehensive trainings, programs, uh educational events and um are able to think about values like we were talking about like non-violence um as a way to-to push forward and so um you know they have a specific training engagement program that works with young people ages 17 to 40 40 in non-violent conflict resolution.

Um they've worked with hundreds of young people, thousands of secondary school students um and I think this is you know places like the DRC these types of grassroots initiatives are going to be the ones that um that really push change forward as well.

**Natasha Zena:** Uh and last but not least “Disrupt.” What's a disruptive innovative idea or project that uh you think is really awesome?

**Scott Warren:** So, and this is one of the things that I actually think about that-that I should have mentioned before is that we're increasingly seeing that a lot of other countries and young people have really good ideas when it comes to democracy and political participation.

So one of those ideas is lowering the voting age to 16. Um and you've seen a number of different countries around the world, some in Latin America like Ecuador and Argentina, um some in Europe like Scotland did this for their recent referendum.

Um that have lowered the voting age to 16 and there's a whole host of reasons for this, um but you're seeing in a lot of these countries that when the voting age gets lower the overall participation rate increases because younger people are participating in a younger age or participating when they're more they're still in school and so they have the opportunity to become lifelong voters.

Um and so um that's something that uh you know Generation Citizen the organization that I was CEO of um you know has pushed has pushed forward um uh a campaign really in local elections across the U.S. to-to lower the voting age to 16.

That's gotten traction. I think a lot of people um you know think it's uh a ridiculous idea at the onset but um you know people have I’ve realized that it's-it's something worth uh worth taking seriously as well.

Um but-but there's a there's a lot of work to be done but the-the effort to lower the voters what an age to 18 in this country took a long-time um and so you know hopefully we'll just we're just getting started here.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah. Scott. Thank you so much for joining us today on the PYD Lab. You've been amazing. The information that you've shared is so valuable and what's the website they can go to again to learn more about Democracy Moves?

**Scott Warren:** No, I’ve really enjoyed uh being here Natasha. Thanks for all the great questions and we're just at [democracymoves.org](https://democracymoves.org). So we'd love for you all to sign-up and-and learn more information and uh to be involved in in the efforts that we have uh that we have going on.

**Natasha Zena:** A special thank you to Scott for sharing the impactful work they're doing over at Democracy Moves.

We appreciate you spending some time with us today. But, the conversation and learning doesn't end here. Youth Power 2 Learning and Evaluation has resources on civic engagement, DRG, advocacy and more.

You can access them at [youthpower.org/pydlab](https://youthpower.org/pydlab). Here are few we recommend to keep the momentum going.

The first is our Youth in Civic Engagement Starter Kit. Now this kit is a great starting point for youth who are interested in becoming engaged citizens and making a difference in their communities. The kit is broken down into several sections, including civic engagement and funding opportunities.

The second is our Youth in Advocacy Starter Kit. This kit focuses on the concept of youth advocacy and digital advocacy. We'll talk about ways that you can use your voice and your platform for change-making activities. This kit also includes webinars, additional toolkits, as well as articles and research to help you get started.

Our third recommendation is the Networking Starter Kit. As Scott noted, networking and connections is a huge part of the work that they do at Democracy Moves as well as [youthlead.org](https://youthlead.org). So, we recommend this starter kit, it contains 15 of the best resources related to networking on YouthLead. It's a great starting point for anyone who feels overwhelmed by the sheer amount of resources available on the internet about networking. So, feel free to check out that starter kit as well at [youthlead.org](https://youthlead.org).

And we have a bonus! It's the toolkit for Youth Inclusion in Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance. This online toolkit is adapted from Youth and Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Programming, a technical guide. Its initial audience was the USAID field and headquarters staff but it actually can benefit anyone who's working in strategy development, program design, management and evaluation of youth and DRG-related programs. It touches on common definitions and terminology, how to design better programs, and it even helps you select appropriate indicators for youth in DRG-related programs.

Remember you can access this kit as well as the others that we recommended over at [youthpower.org/pydlab](https://youthpower.org/pydlab).

Until next time. Thank you for joining us. I’m Natasha and you've been in the PYD Lab.