

Overcome the Podcast - Episode 10
By Christian Bowman

When I got the news that I had not been accepted to USC, I was disappointed. And I was scared. I felt bad for the group of amazing filmmakers from UT that had helped me make a short film specifically for the application to the Cinematic Arts program, I felt bad for the professors and professionals who wrote powerful letters of recommendation, some being SC alumni themselves. I was a little confused honestly since I had a 3.82 GPA from the University of Texas at Austin, I had graduated with Honors and had strong compelling essays that I even had peer reviewed and workshopped.

I whole heartedly believed I was going to get in to the Graduate program at USC, so much so that I sold my company and moved leaving everyone I knew back in Austin, including the support group who had helped me with my cardio therapy. All to head out to LA where I no longer knew anyone for this foolish idea that just getting into that University alone was going to be my back door into a seemingly impenetrable industry. Before, each time that I thought I bombed an audition, I booked the part. When I thought there was no way I was going to get into UT, I got the spot. But here, with one of the hardest schools in the world to get into, I had been cocky and I thought for sure I was accepted. But I wasn't.

The rejection hit hard. Again, in life, I was in a scramble position to try to land on my feet. The job hunt became a full time job in and of itself, sending out well over

500 resumes. After the real estate scam had stolen a bunch of money before I arrived, I had to sell off some of the remaining film production gear I still had to make ends meet when the rest of my savings got thin, which turned out to be pretty easy in a film town actually. I would post up a nice camera lens or professional tripod and within minutes would have a bidding war on it. I was able to pay the bills and picked myself back up after the USC carpet was pulled from underneath my feet.

During the sale of one of the sliders I had, I got into a conversation providing the instructions on how to operate it. The man purchasing it, Jay Menez, was buying some of my gear for his upcoming television show, Hollywood Real. Our conversation went beyond just a description of the equipment when he asked why I was selling it. After a very in depth conversation, he said, “Hell, I want to hire you” and so he did, bringing me in to freelance for him on some of the projects he had. The show he was developing, Hollywood Real, was really interesting because he worked to find out how successful people in the industry had overcome their hardest moments and moved beyond to rise up again. Not only was he someone who had faced struggles himself and picked himself up by his bootstraps, but the way he was engaging his guests was especially inspiring.

Jay also happen to collaborate with the worlds greatest vocal coach: Roger Love, who had just finished working with Bradley Cooper on the film “A Star is Born”. He has worked with some of the top musicians in the world and even his daughter was an award winning songwriter. I’ll link both of these guys websites in this podcast, not only do I highly recommend checking them out, but also, I can’t thank them enough for just being

amazing human beings. These guys are pro's on another level and taught me so much. Jay has become a bit of a mentor and has contributed to this podcast and Roger Love is just phenomenal with what he does to help people. I try to incorporate his vocal warm ups and the lessons I have gathered from just being in the room with him watching him coach others. I learned a lot while being a camera operator with them.

I still needed full time work, however, LA is expensive. After more than 500 resumes went out, I had only received four telephone calls, of those four, I had two interviews. Of those, I got one offer: A consultant job with the Los Angeles Film School as Stage Manager. I was so relieved! And, it combined working in an academic environment with my love and knowledge of all things film, media and production. Even though USC waited so long to tell me that I didn't get the spot and my livelihood was on the line along my dream of being able to professionally be the storyteller I imagined at the global level I had hoped for was crushed for a moment, Everything was going to be ok.

My name is Christian Bowman and this is Overcome.

It was in the darkness of that chaos however, before I met Jay and Roger and before I began working at the Los Angeles Film School, that Jenny and I had our first telephone conversation. And to be honest, it was making this connection with her that sort of made everything ok and calmed my heart, even when I was on the brink of losing it all. Because, the truth was, I had lost it all. Many times over. I had been tempered in

the fires of rejection and steeled in the pain and loss over the entire course of my life. I was forged to stay strong and persevere when it all fell apart. But it was her forgiveness that fundamentally completed things for me. And the foundation from which I'm able to share this story here now

I had this broken heart that was on the mend, literally, and after we connected... we were able to approach the moment of impact and cry and push through it and then... keep talking. We were able to discover who we were and let each other know that we've always thought about each other and that we would always be there for each other from now on. I was completely alone in LA with nothing and no-one for a minute, but I wasn't lonely anymore. Of course I had my son, but he was grown now and living his life. The hole that had been in my heart long before he was born was now filled with this different kind of feeling. More complete than I had ever felt been since before the accident. I knew that this connection with her on the other side of a telephone call was now and forever going to exist. We didn't just reach out and introduce ourselves as the people in the other car, we developed a bond and a relationship that has been healing and supportive. And now she's now one of my best friends.

As far as leaving Austin and my friends and family there behind, I knew that this chance idea with the USC graduate school and moving to LA was really a rainbow bridge to leave behind the lifestyle that killed me. Not long after getting the job with the film school, I began rock climbing again. I met some climbing friends and lived three blocks away from a gym. I was feeling much better and, with health insurance now, I went to

get a check up with a cardiologist in LA. I was still taking four pills a day. One was a low dose aspirin, two were very cheap generics: a beta blocker and a diuretic, but the last was an expensive pill, Entresto, used for heart failure that I worried about continuing once the patient assistance program wore off, which was coming up.

After a full medical exam and an MRI, he let me know that I was doing great and he was even surprised to read about my past based on my current physical status. I was able to discontinue the Entresto as my heart had gotten better. I know that a great deal of that is due to proper diet and exercise, being sober and a whole lot of work from the cardiologists back in Austin, but a part of it was also having this sort of unconditional love and acceptance from someone who was affected by the same traumatic accident.

After I felt more complete and aware, I was invited to something called a sound bath in Venice Beach. I was skeptical at first. It sounded a little more on the esoteric side of things that probably would have been something my mom would have gone to back in the day, but as it was a gift from a friend, so I went with an open mind. The woman who led it, introduced herself as Suzy, and after a brief bit of instruction, she began playing these crystal singing bowls while a group of people all lay down on these pillows. It was inside the back of a building and the roof had opened up to the cool night sky. I calmed my mind and had begun the breathing technique she described and not long after, I felt like I was hallucinating. It was kind of beautiful, I honestly had this little dream where I was floating through space. It was definitely trippy. I had kind of experienced the same thing in one of those sensory deprivation float chambers once

before. Afterward, she had everyone write something that they wanted to let go of and walk up on a piece of paper and then bring it to the front and burn it in this fire. So I did and when I put the paper into the fire, I cried a little bit. But it wasn't sad tears this time. It was more than I can describe. The lights came up and we put the pillows back and I thanked Suzy and began working my way to the front of the room, passing everyone, I felt like they were watching me and drawn in somehow.

A grown man connecting with his emotions and coming to tears in a sound bath in Venice Beach was apparently some sort of mating call for the women there... they all wanted to give me a hug and connect with me. It was kind of funny as my friend had to wait till they all got to hold me for a minute. Each.

Not long afterward, I did meet an amazing woman, Brittany. She is a writer and kind and gentle and sweet and beautiful. A world traveler and an artist. On our first date riding the Harley up the PCH Highway in California, I told her about my sound bath experience and she asked about the girl who led it. I described her and she exclaimed "Suzy!" They had been roommates during a retreat in India while Brittany was abroad. Brittany has also been instrumental in guiding me to create this podcast and I owe a great deal of gratitude toward her for being so patient and positive with the process.

My stepdad had a heart attack while playing drums at a gig in Hawaii, where he had been living ever since the car accident. I wanted to try to help. I loved LA, I loved

working at the Film School, I really loved when I got to teach but to be eligible to instruct at the Bachelors level, I needed a Masters. My job as it was at the film school was fulfilling but also limiting. I decided to submit an application to the University of Hawaii at Manoa. It would allow me to see my stepdad and make sure he was ok and also fulfill a requirement if I chose to teach again.

I received the acceptance letter from the University of Hawaii and, it felt nice. After the denial letter before, it was a welcome feeling. I was surprised with how quickly it all happened, I applied in late November, almost with the same kind of energy as dipping my toes into the water, just to see if I would get it and I went from curiosity to confirming that my first semester would start just after New Years Eve. In a little more than a month.

But I had developed a relationship with this amazing woman, who had a great job and had wonderful friends in LA. I wasn't sure if I would take the UH spot or not. I didn't know how much help my stepdad needed and I also didn't want to lose her.

We talked about how much we meant to each other and we both wanted to be with each other, even if there was a slight casual dismissal of intuition initially regarding the upcoming move. We were in it together. I would head out first and set everything up and she began preparations on her end to join me as soon as possible.

It took many years for me to be able to be complete with someone. To be conscious and honest about who I am, about where I came from and about how that has affected the way I interact. We're all a bit complicated and we're all a bit simple. We need open communication, love and acceptance for who we are and Brittany and I were able to provide all of those things and more for each other in a mature way that I hadn't been able to be before. I hadn't been comfortable in my own skin or had come to terms with the damages of the past. I hadn't taken the hard look in the mirror to recognize the self sabotaging behaviors or peel the shadows back and recognize not just what I was doing before, but why. And that recognition, and that realization, allowed me to understand not just who I was but who I could be. Embracing my flaws and accepting them in order to break a cycle that had prevented me from evolving before. And I was able to do that with this woman who understood me.

With my lease coming to an end, I had my son drive down from San Francisco where he had been living with his girlfriend. He was 18 and starting his own life and I gave him practically everything I owned that he could drive back up to the bay. I kept a few boxes of important things and shipped my Harley out but I released all my possessions. Including my prized beautiful Restoration Hardware Vintage Leather Chesterfield Couch that had anchored my ass from my first semester at UT back in West Campus. It was liberating. And, finally, the time came for me to move. Bodhi, dropped me off at the airport and I was off.

A wonderful costume designer named Marylou Lim was selling her place in Honolulu that she let me stay at for a few nights before I got to move in to the apartment that I set up prior to arriving. Then, Brittany got to come out for the Christmas break and it was amazing. I took her to see dolphins and whales. We took a catamaran ride through Kaneohe Bay over a bunch of sea turtles and swam out to waterfalls on the north shore. She had to get back to LA for a bit afterward but we had begun the processes for her to move out to Hawaii with her lovely little dog Sienna and we had a fun countdown every day until she arrived for good!

Life has since evolved to walking down to watch the sunset every night after I come back from a heart healthy surf session while she goes for her run around the Ala Wai canal. A full house and a full heart in a tropical little paradise in the middle of the Pacific. Life is good.

I had invited Jenny to come visit in LA when we first began talking, but after I mentioned that I was going to be moving to Hawaii, it sounded like that would be much more appropriate for us to finally meet in person and hug and cry and just be. Face to face. We began looking at the plans and trying to figure out how and when it would work with her husband and her job. Having multiple discussions about the logistics of it all.

The more we talked about actually getting a chance to sit down and watch something beautiful like a sunset together, the more exciting it became. I was trying to

figure out when it would work best for my school schedule as well so that I could be more present during their trip out to see me. Spring Break 2020 arrived. As things began to really look like it might be happening soon, and we started looking at airline tickets, the global pandemic struck. Covid 19 had gotten past containment efforts out of China. The world was suddenly locked down. All travel plans were scrapped. Everything, stopped. With no end in sight.

But it was ok.

They say never let a good crisis go to waste. And so this podcast was born. While this first season has explored, at sometimes great lengths, my own personal story... and kudos if you made it this far! But the goal of all of this has been to explore if there are others out there who have been involved in some type of major trauma and somehow found each other afterward. What kinds of difficulties were faced? What kinds of victories? When I told someone about how Jenny and I had connected on the telephone, and how much her forgiveness changed my life, she made the decision to reach out and contact the drunk driver that accidentally killed her sister. To forgive them. I told her, she would be changing that persons life.

Each time I share this, it somehow reaches someone in a way that moves them to open their hearts.

Considering my heart is this rock and roll burned and scarred little thing who has been torn and broken and found a way to come back from it, I know that if others are able to share what their stories are, then we can learn and grow together.

The hope for future podcast seasons and episodes will be to explore just that. To connect survivors and bridge the forgiveness while also diving into the rough stuff.

Facing that mountain and lacing up the climbing shoes.

My name is Christian Bowman and this has been Overcome.

Thank you.

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