

## TEDxSMU Live Blog

*TEDxSMU partnered with CoHabitat, a startup community and coworking space in Uptown Dallas, to live blog the inaugural TEDx event at SMU on October 10. The following is the aggregate postings from one of the CoHabitat bloggers.*

October 10, 2009

By Ajay Waghray

### **Live Blog: The TEDxSMU First-Timer Experience**

Good morning! Glad y'all get to join us on the Cohabitat blog for the TEDxSMU event. This is my first TED event, I was very fortunate to be invited. It's going to be a very enlightening, excited Saturday, I can't put to you in words how excited I am to be here live blogging the whole event for you.

My name is Ajay Waghray, I'll be covering the event this morning along with Bob Payne and Frankie De Soto. I'm going to do my best to keep up abreast of the goings-on here with Dallas's movers and shakers and even some out-of-towners.

For those of you that might be a little lost, I dug up some info that you might find useful in trying to figure out important things like what the heck TED is, why is there a little 'x' after TED for this event, how SMU put this on, etc. and conveniently crammed it all into one link in five minutes.

I know, I know, please hold your applause and expressions of wonder 'til the end of the show. Otherwise we'll hafta stop every five minutes. Another great link to check out is the main TED site. Lots of great videos of some brilliant speakers there as well, try to take a shower and eat before you get sucked in. Trust me, I haven't done that, paid for it.

Alright, just wanted to say hello before we get started. I'm off to get caffeinated and fed, then to a "Get To Know You Warm-Up." "Tai-chi for the brain"? Hmmmmm....k. See you in a few!

9:35am: Inside the auditorium, you should see this place! Chris Anderson's talking about TED via video, there's a drumkit for Polyphonic Spree up front right now. OMG I'm so excited.

"TEDxSMU is not organized in any way by TED." This is all put on by SMU. Great job guys!

9:45am: Rives and Kelly just gave a great intro. Kelly is from Dallas?? SMU graduate. We've got some great local flavor here. Short film up now by the Sneaky Giants. Crazy-lookin' stuff.

9:50am: Bobby Haas is now up, talking about perspective (that's the theme for the first session, changing it). He works in investments and photographs for National Geographic from above. In the air, down on the ground. What a variation in perspective.

9:51am: "-When I look at your images, I don't know what I'm looking at. -What you're looking at is your home."

9:55am: Mr. Haas's unique aerial perspective gives him unique insight to the threat of climate change. A very interesting discussion on climate change action based on the interests of man and not simply nations.

"What will change everything? Everything has already changed."

9:56am: Apparently Kennedy gave a speech in Caruth Auditorium? The podium he spoke at is up front. Fascinating.

10:01am: Bobby thinks there's plenty of hope, recognizing that the next generation knows that the issue of climate change is on its doorstep. I know others think so too. Rives is back up after Bobby ends. Dean of SMU's School of Engineering,

telling me that Kennedy announced we were going to the Moon at this podium?! Wow! It arrived five minutes before the show. That's incredible. A representation of the power of the individual.

10:05am: Kelly brings Jill Sobule on stage. Morning voice IS very sexy. Beautiful music.

10:07am: Looking for info? This session's got TEDTalks and live talks from David Gallo, Greg Harper, Anousheh Ansari, and Bobby Haas. The musical performance is by Jill Sobule.

10:09am: "I do like Texas, this song might not, uhh, show it."

10:12am: Joshua Prince-Ramus is onstage now? He wasn't in the line-up. Hmmmm, this should be interesting. Talking about architecture, it looks like to make it more useful.

10:14am: Info on Joshua Prince-Ramus: [http://blog.ted.com/2006/07/joshua\\_princera\\_1.php](http://blog.ted.com/2006/07/joshua_princera_1.php)

10:19am: An interesting discussion on proposing that architects see projects through creation and execution and fitting your project's agenda through the constraints instead of warring with them. There's a discussion now on the new Dallas Theater Center!: <http://www.dallastheatercenter.org/>

10:21am: The Dallas Theater Center is unique in that it can't change scenery at whim, unlike theaters in New York, Chicago etc. How do you accommodate that in a new building? The Superfly Stage. Incredible. Check it out: <http://www.dallasperformingarts.org/experiencethecenter/index.aspx>

10:34am: Amazing talk on the new Dallas Theater Center, check it out when it comes out after the conference. Now Anousheh Ansari is on stage, talking about going into space!!!

10:37am: Anousheh's family was one of many that sponsored the Space X-Prize. Wow, check it out: <http://www.spacex.com/>. Now a video of her going up with the Russian space program. What an amazing experience!

10:43am: When she lands from space, it looks like a freakin' explosion in the middle of nowhere. "You're a little disoriented when you come out of the capsule." Yeah, I bet! Now she's discussing how she's inspiring people, being the first person from Iran in space. I can only imagine what it's like being visiting someone like that.

"What can change everything? YOU."

10:46am: Audience TEDTalk: An Ode to Pluto. I love this place.

10:48am: "There is now scientific proof that size DOES really matter."

10:49am: Rives is up now, he's a poet, up on TED. Check out his bio that I posted earlier, great videos of him.

10:52am: "And that is how you trespass in New York City." Well done Rives!

10:53am: A great moment for me! I am watching now the video that started my interest in TED. The video on researchers at MIT working on "sixth sense" technology. Absolutely amazing, check it out: [http://www.ted.com/talks/pattie\\_maes\\_demos\\_the\\_sixth\\_sense.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/pattie_maes_demos_the_sixth_sense.html)

11:01am: Ira Greenberg is up now with a talk entitled: "Computation Powered by Artificial Stupidity." Brilliant. An interesting discussion on art and innovation. Helmets Required!

11:03am: "Computation is the creative medium of our time."

11:13am: Amazing, Dave Gallo is actually here! Talking about deep sea exploration. Apparently the closer you get to the bottom you can hear the ping of your own sonar coming back to you. There are also “flower garden banks” at the bottom and “rivers, lakes at the bottom of the sea”? WHAT?!

11:17am: “All people on earth would fit in a cube 1 mile x 1 mile x 1 mile.”

11:21am: A discussion ensues on different ways that humans have spread and affected the ocean through chemical pollution, light pollution, and other ways we affect our environment. Red lights for gas lanterns, white lights for cities, blue lights for ships at sea, incredible the footprint that we have made on our planet.

11:23am: You can catch David Gallo’s other TED talks here: [http://www.ted.com/speakers/david\\_gallo.html](http://www.ted.com/speakers/david_gallo.html)

11:26am: Another Audience TED talk about whale migration and birthing. A very charming man, definitely from Texas. :-)

11:27am: “All of us have heard the term ‘gang bang’.” I’m awake now.

11:28am: Okay, this is apparently referring to the team nature of the process of whale breeding. The males must be used as a platform for two creatures weighing thousands of pounds can mate in a very buoyant medium. Best TEDTalk EVER.

11:30am: Awesome, great session, lunch! We’re doing TED DIY during lunch? It’s at 12:40pm, “where did you get that scar?” I might participate. See you soon!

12:12pm: I just met William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer (UT grad, hook ‘em!), had a great conversation and had them sign my book. Amazing young men. Arthur Benjamin just blew my mind too, great guy. It’s gonna be a good afternoon!

12:26pm: Check out some great pictures by Kim Ritzenthaler! <http://www.flickr.com/photos/blake4tx/tags/ritzenthaler/>

12:57pm: Great TED do-it-yourself talks by the audience. Our pal Dave Copps just got up to explain his scar involving a story including SNL and Rock Balboa. Sure, alright.

Here’s what’s up for Session 2 – Change Your Thinking. We’ve got talks here from Rogers Hartmann (I saw her on Oprah! Yes, I just admitted to having watched Oprah), William Abraham, Ira Greenberg, Art Benjamin and Aaron Reedy. Musical performance is by Kim Corbet.

I’m now sitting next to our whale mating guy, Bill Aston. I’m not sure it can get any better.

1:02pm: “Would you rather die of: 1. Climate change 2. Oil wars 3. Nuclear holocaust? The answer left out is ‘None of the above’.” Amory Lovins, dope!

1:07pm: Amory Lovins is discussing how to reduce carbon emissions without doing much that’s too radical actually. Existing technologies used in innovative ways to save the planet. I like it. More information on Amory Lovins and the Rocky Mountain Institute: [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org).

1:10pm: “Our biggest ally is the U.S. military.” Really??

1:13pm: “If the U.S. used energy as efficiently as the top ten states in the country do, ~62% of the energy created by coal would be unnecessary.”

Apparently Amory Lovins is a banana farmer as well. Who knew.

1:17pm: “Motors use 3/5<sup>th</sup>s of the world’s power.... Short, fat pipes lose less energy compared to long, skinny pipes. Simple Victorian-era engineering folks.” Man, there’s so much great data here, I can barely keep up. Y’all are just gonna hafta check

this out later when they post it on the TEDxSMU web site ([www.TEDxSMU.org](http://www.TEDxSMU.org)).

1:20pm: "Factor 10 Engineering: A plot of for the non-violent overthrow of bad engineering." I love this guy!

1:27pm: Rogers Hartmann is now talking about living with Dystonia. She's in this kind of shape and she still loves running. What an inspiration. "I've decided that I'm frienemies with Dystonia." Well done!

1:33pm: Radiohead video up now for *House of Cards*, very interesting. Put together by a friend of TED, Aaron Copland.

1:38pm: William Abraham is up now, discussing a possible grand unified theory of philosophy, science, technology, etc. Very enjoyable, he's a gentleman from Ireland. Naturally, a very delightful Irish accent.

1:47pm: Rives is now discussing TEDxKids. What did they ask the kids yesterday? "What do you parents currently not know?" This will be interesting.

1:49pm: Lewis Warren's now up. He is 12 and a classical pianist. 12. My mind is currently being blown, incredible.

1:55pm: (Rives:) "What would change everything for you Lewis? (Lewis:) "Well, Bach was what they called a kapellmeister. I'd like to be a modern-day kapellmeister with my music too."

2:00pm: Up next: Dave Weaver with "What is a TED?" I'm sure that name is wrong, I'll fix it later. He's using the color-coded homeland security threat level rating thing to explain this, it's absolutely hilarious.

2:04pm: "TED is the only event with content that's worth sticking my hand in a toilet for."  
Check out Dave's blog: <http://questionthedogma.com/>

2:07pm: Next up, Greg Harper. Lots of great gadgets here that he's discussing. A camera with a projector? That exists now?!

2:15pm: Greg Harper just turned off everyone's cell phones. I think everyone just had a group panic attack.

You might have noticed that I'm updating previous posts with pictures and things. Wonderful pictures taken throughout the seminar, check them out when you can. The photographer's name is Kim Ritzenthaler, great work here. Keep checking older posts!

Now we've got a previous TED presentation on Siftables, the second presentation that I've ever seen through TED, check it out: <http://siftables.com/>

2:24pm: Arthur Benjamin just invited onto the stage five people with calculators, including Amory Lovins and Rogers Hartmann. I hope this is good for his sake.

2:27pm: Alright, this guy is squaring numbers in his head faster than five people can do it for each number on their calculators. WOW.

2:30pm: "I'd like to square a five digit number but most calculators cannot get that far." Nice.

2:41pm: He's doing the 5-digit square! There's all kinds of stuff coming out of his mouth right now. He's adding things to "tennis" and "mover"...huh? Wow, he got there. It's incredible.

Okay, next talk is confidential. Out for a bit, see you later.

2:48pm: Demo time! Field filter? This girl has the cutest Texas drawl, and a great product. Water goes in gross, comes out completely clear. Well done young lady!

2:52pm: Aaron Reedy's up now, trying to get his kids more interested in biology. Fund for Teachers is what he's focusing on, trying to get his out there learning. We can never have enough great programs like this! Apparently he asked for funds from this Fund to row up the Mississippi River from New Orleans. Took samples of water to determine different quality of water. One thing they weren't expecting was so much water. 15 feet above flood stage! Flow rate of 1 million gallons per second!

2:54pm: "We need science teachers that really believe they're scientists."

2:55pm: Kim Corbet's up!

3:07pm: Break time! Tom Riley's thanking all of us for coming, nice pink glasses! See you in a bit after I charge my laptop.

## **Live Blog Part Deux: The TEDxSMU First-Timer Experience**

4:06pm: Starting a new entry for this session. It's getting a little crazy with all this data! That break was extremely necessary and productive. Shook hands with Bobby Haas, met some new folks including Tony Cecela who went to school with Tom Rielly, What a great networking arena. Now, Jeff Talley, he's been to warzones? Go on....

4:12pm: By the way, here are the talks for Session 3: Change Your Life. Talks are from Jeff Talley, William Kamkwamba (loved his appearance on *The Daily Show!*) and Bryan Mealer, Tanya Pinto and Turk Pipkin. Musical performances will be by Jill Sobule and more Lewis Warren (great googily-moogily, this kid is 12 and a genius!).

4:13pm: Jeff Talley was the provincial engineer in Baghdad, appointed by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to secure Baghdad for the Iraqi people.

P.S. Still adding pictures to the previous post. Sit tight, I promise I'm working on it.

4:20pm: "We implemented a recycling program. In Baghdad of all places."

4:21pm: William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer everyone, check out the links I posted below.

4:25pm: People keep making fun of me for being very excited about William. They might think that it's just because he's been on *The Daily Show* and TED previously. I'm going to have to tell you now that this is not correct.

The reason this guy fascinates me is because he learned what I learned in college in engineering at 14 through books he couldn't read. He built a windmill that took years of engineering for companies in three months. He provided electricity for an entire village while only barely knowing English, before he graduated high school, and without Google. If that's not enough to impress you, I'm not sure what will. It was a true honor to meet him earlier today.

4:32pm: Ray Zahab talk now, here's the link: [www.impossible2possible.com](http://www.impossible2possible.com)

4:37pm: Audience talk, we're talking about barefoot running. I love barefoot running!

4:42pm: Tanya Pinto's up now, she went over to India and discovered very wise yet malnourished children. She began Baal Dan ([www.baaldan.com](http://www.baaldan.com)) to help children in need in India. Apparently she's big on peanut butter.

It saved her life, I can see it being a big deal!

Jill Sobule's up now. "I can't decide what to play, maybe a song about Mexican wrestlers?" Yes please.

4:48pm: Ryan Plesko's tweeting during this by the way, you can check him out @plesko.

4:50pm: "Okay, which one next, end of the world or Googling old people?" Googling old people! Googling old people!!

4:53pm: I love how we're talking about old people having sex while a 12-year-old is holding up her lyrics. This is hilarious, I love Jill Sobule.

4:55pm: Turk Pipkin's up from The Nobility Project. Working with Nobel laureates to do advocacy for solutions that work. All of their work is online at The Nobility Project ([www.nobility.org](http://www.nobility.org)).

5:00pm: "The cameraman that took this picture told me that I looked like a human q-tip."

5:03pm: "Women grow 80% of the food in the world and own less than 10% of the land."

5:11pm: Sorry I didn't post for a while, Turk really roped me in. He was discussing what he did for a school in Africa, planting trees, building rainwater collection systems, and a high school for the kids to continue their education.

"It's not hard to changed the world. Just pick an issue you care about, and take action."

5:16pm: If you guys have been enjoying this blog, I'm going to have some of my own stuff up soon. Feel free to follow me on Twitter, @ajaywaghray. Shameless plug over.

P.S. TEDxDubai has 1,000 attendees. WOW!!

5:19pm: POLYPHONIC SPREE!!! Side note, I saw these guys at ACL in 2003. They're awesome, I can't wait.

5:57pm: Kapow! That blew by fast. Hope y'all enjoy the live coverage of TEDxSMU on the CoHabitat blog (<http://cohabitat.us>). This quite honestly one of the best things I've ever decided to do, I'm glad we could share the ride together. I'm sure this won't be the last time we see each other. Feel free to follow me on Twitter until next time at <http://twitter.com/ajaywaghray/>. I'll keep you up-to-date on what's going on with me since we're such good friends now. In the meantime, I'm gonna try to see if I can sneak my way into the TEDxSMU after-party at Reel FX Studios. Take care, until next time!

## **TEDxSMU: My TED Moment and Other Thoughts**

Posted October 11th, 2009

Good afternoon. Ajay Waghray here, I was live-blogging for the TEDxSMU event yesterday. I hope everyone either enjoyed following the posts yesterday during the day or reading them today after everything is all said and done. It was a great deal of fun, I hope it shows.

Last night, a friend of CoHabitat mentioned to me at the TEDxSMU After Party that I should post something about my experience after I've had some time to meditate on it for a bit. I thought about that, mulling it over before ultimately deciding it was a great idea.

So here I am, sitting in my apartment with my running clothes on, shoes and all. It's a cloudy day out, a little chilly, and I'm supposed to be doing something other than writing this post. The Cowboys are playing at this very moment (I caught a little bit of it, it wasn't pretty), I finally watched *The Office* with a few more shows to go on my DVR to catch up on. "Why the heck are you telling us all this? I don't care what you're wearing or what shows you need to watch." The reason I'm saying all this is because it fits into the larger point of the feeling I currently have coursing through me right now about all of those things.

It all just doesn't seem to matter.

Yesterday, through my own tenacity and Blake Burris's generosity, I had the experience of a lifetime. I got the chance to experience a TED event, something most people will never get to say. I can write here without being disingenuous in any way that the experience has altered my perspective and changed what I consider important. I met some incredible people that really have inspired me to want to do something, to make an impact. All of this makes the Cowboys losing to the Chiefs or

what happened on *Heroes* completely insignificant. TEDxSMU has put my focus back where it belongs: on what I can do to change everything.

I'm not completely sure what I'm going to do. I made an attempt at fleshing it out last night, there are some things to consider. Still, to have so many wonderful, gifted people telling you that you're talented and on the right track...there's nothing like it. I'm determined to make the most of it.

I was also told that I should include my own TED moment. I've heard of these before, where it's something that could only happen at TED or just affects you personally. Honestly, it's really hard to say just one of those moments was awesome! There were so many great ones from beginning to end. I'll take a stab at it though.

My TED moment came in an unexpected moment at the After Party. If you've ever been to a TED event, you know how awesome the after parties are. If you haven't, though, I personally think it's where the magic happens. Maybe this is because I was busy covering the event during the day, but the after party is where everyone can loosen up and you can chat with your favorite speakers or just whoever else you find really interesting. I ran into all kinds of people I really wanted to talk with, it truly was my favorite part of the day. There was one moment that really stuck out to me and meant a lot though.

I was in the beverage line chatting with some folks when Turk Pipkin came up. His talk at TEDxSMU about The Nobility Project was really fascinating, a look at Nobel laureates pitching in to solve the world's problems. It was an intriguing part of TEDxSMU, especially when I noticed that Steven Chu was included in the trailer he presented.

The appointment of Steven Chu as Secretary of Energy was an appointment that I was especially thrilled about. Energy is such an important issue to me, this country, and the world, that I felt they really needed to get the right person in there. Instead of picking who I expected they would, however, they went above and beyond my expectations and selected a Nobel laureate to the post. A true man of science like myself that also was an adept administrator who could get things done. I did my research shortly after his appointment. Needless to say, I was impressed.

Anyway, so I grabbed Turk for a minute and congratulated him on a great talk. There was plenty of discussion on what he had done in Africa, the trailers posted online, etc. Eventually, it got to the point where I could ask him the burning question in my mind: "So what was Steven Chu like? I saw that you interviewed him for the movie."

Turk just kind of looked at me for a minute and paused before telling me about the interview. Apparently Mr. Chu was a very bright man as I had hoped, telling Turk what amounted to a very compelling set of solutions for energy problems. He at the end said this: "Interesting question by the way, I've met very few people who even know who Steven Chu is. I'm impressed."

YOU are impressed with ME?

Dude. I think I can die now.

Thanks for reading everyone.