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07 MAY USING FILM AND A BROMPTON FOLDABLE BIKE TO PRESERVE THE PLANET



Most mornings, Beezhan Tulu hops on his bright green bike and rides down Highway 101 from his home on the Gaviota Coast to the most westerly bus stop in Goleta, where he folds up his bike, pays the \$1.25 bus fare, and completes the last leg of his 20-mile trek into Santa Barbara. Beezhan, a local filmmaker, purposefully does not own a car, and his Day-Glo bike is his sole means of transportation.

But that hasn't always been the case.

Born in Iran, Beezhan came to the U.S. as a teenager in 1979 and until recently, had always owned a car. That changed six years ago when he decamped to Hawaii to give himself enough creative space to finish the seven documentaries he was juggling. Prior to moving, he decided he didn't want the hassle of taking his BMW Mini Cooper with him, so he spent six months searching for his ideal bike before finally settling on the British-made Brompton.

Unfolded, Beezhan's bike resembles an adolescent caught in the middle of a growth spurt. Its gangly handlebars and protruding seat tower over the rest of its body, as if waiting for the bike's low frame and small wheels to catch up. Folded, however, it condenses down to

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an item hardly bigger than an overstuffed carry-on suitcase, and the transition between the two states is surprisingly graceful. No tools are required, and the entire conversion takes about 15 seconds.

Because of how easy the foldable bike travels, Beezhan has carried it with him all over the U.S. and world. In Hawaii, he put his first miles on it by making the 40-mile round trip from Pāhoa to Hilo once a week. In the years since, the bike has accompanied him to at least nine states and various international locales including Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Jordan, Belgium, Amsterdam, Denmark, Canada, England, France, and Madagascar.

In early 2014, Beezhan moved to the Gaviota Coast and decided it was his responsibility to the planet — and to future generations — to continue his car-free existence. In 2012, transportation accounted for 28% of total greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., and he wanted to dramatically reduce his contribution to that figure.

It isn't just the reduction in greenhouse gases, however, that keeps him pedaling.

"The view is spectacular. By the time I get to Santa Barbara, I'm in such a great mood because I've been looking at beautiful birds and the ocean for over an hour," he says. The more he bikes, the more connected he feels to his surroundings, and the more isolated driving a car looks. And although Beezhan says he immensely enjoyed the cars he had in the past, now he's focused on aligning the actions he takes in his personal life with the stewardship messages of his films.

Beezhan spent an earlier part of his career in filmmaking as a digital photography and cinematography editor with Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. in Hollywood. But a desire to do something he found more meaningful led him to start his own business, Living Web Films, which makes "films that promote a healthier planet for all species." One of his most recent films, *Selma Rubin and Community of Life*, documents the Community Environmental Council co-founder's successful opposition to a housing development on the Gaviota Coast.

"My filmmaking now is all about the health of the planet," Beezhan says, "and biking is my way of striving to live a conscious, mindful life that tries to preserve that health."

Such mindfulness does not come without a price.

Not having a car means Beezhan has to manage his time better and plan when traffic on the freeway is the least dangerous. He also has to pack his gear bag carefully with extra clothes and other essentials, without making it too burdensome. When he does need a car — like when he's shooting at some location out of town or has a lot of filmmaking gear to move around — he rents one. In order to minimize his rental use and expenses, he undergoes an extensive pre-production process that, most of the time, allows him to complete all of the filming he needs in a certain location in one stroke.

Planning is at the heart of what makes Beezhan's car-free lifestyle work, but so is his conviction that preserving the health of the planet is worth some sacrifice on his part. "We all love comfort," Beezhan contends, "but we have to understand at what price we're

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comfortable. I know I'm just one man, compared to billions, but at the end of the day, I'm happy knowing that I did everything in my power to reject the type of lifestyle that is destroying the planet."

See Beezhan set up his trusty foldable bike in just 15 seconds:



Video by Matt Perko.

Written by Emily DeMarco, Posted in Bike, Drive Less, Personal Stories, Sustainable Transportation

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