

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

My Older Younger Sister: Youth Market researcher Kito Robinson wonders what she can tell her fifteen-year-old sister that she doesn't already know.

Tony Kahn:

Hi everybody. This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston, and welcome aboard our first podcast of 2006. If the past is any indication, I expect this year is going to feel even shorter than the last. But, I'm not the only one who feels that way. We have a friend, Kito Robinson. [music starts] In early 2004, when *Morning Stories* was just starting as a broadcast, she did a piece for us about her younger sister. And ...

Kito Robinson:

... the acceleration of time.

Tony Kahn:

Well, about two years later, we decided we wanted to do her piece as our podcast as well. So here it is, today's Morning Story from Kito Robinson, *My Older Younger Sister*.

[Music]

Kito Robinson:

At fifteen, my sister wears clothing sexier than mine, carries handbags more expensive than mine, and puts on her make-up so much better, it scares me. She's phone-savvy, tech-savvy, and has seen as much R- and X-rated TV as I have. Her favorite show, in fact, is *Sex in the City*. When I go home now, I borrow my younger sister's clothes and sort through her hand-me-downs. I walk down the streets of Boston wearing the mini-skirts she no longer deems stylish. I wear the jackets that she's left in the dust.

When I was fifteen, people in their twenties were from a distant universe, a galaxy that was cool, and had a *savoir faire* that I hoped someday to master. In the meantime, on a good day, I'd dabble with lip-gloss. I've worked as a market researcher with a variety of commercial clients that target my sister's demographic – clients who actively foster the acceleration of time. Ten-year-olds aren't called "kids" in this world; they're called "tweens" to associate them with real teens five years older. Nine-year-olds are sold thongs and already have opinions about panty lines. Song lyrics that fifth graders sing are the same ones that a thirty-year-old man listens to, and the graphic sex and violence already entrenched in video games are repackaged as the new board games along with Candy Land and Clue.

Another side effect of all this is that my generation is feeling a lot older too, because we're being chased from the rear by a generation who saw Britney Spears take her clothes off while still twirling her braids. When my sister asked me where I shop, I

wonder if it was curiosity that prompted it – or fear? Was she looking to me for the changes time would bring, or just the reassurance that the changes would be there? I think about having children and about guiding them through the various stages of life, but I worry. There may not be any life stages left to teach.

[Music: Vocals, “Love, it seems so delicate; I’ve seen it on the TV”]

Tony Kahn:

We’re here right now in the studio with Kito Robinson herself, two years later, looking even younger [laughs] no matter how she feels about it. Kito, in Internet time, a whole millennium has past since you did that. Is that still your story?

Kito Robinson:

Well, my sister’s now looking forward to college, and it’s easier for us to communicate.

Tony Kahn:

You were looking back at her and wondering about what that meant for your own future ...

Kito Robinson:

Yes.

Tony Kahn:

... having kids.

Kito Robinson:

That has not changed. [laughter] I do still wonder about what my children will go through, and and how I’ll relate to them. I don’t have an iPod. I really should. My sister, of course, has the iPod, the Shuffle, [Tony laughs] everything and so she can, she will be able to hear this on her iPod, and I can’t. My mom has become more tech-savvy than even I have; my grandfather, who I just visited with, has every device you could imagine.

Tony Kahn:

You’re kidding.

Kito Robinson:

And so it’s, it’s ... I don’t know if it’s now about age or if it’s about interest, or if it’s about time?

Tony Kahn:

Is it because you work more than full-time?

Kito Robinson:

Maybe.

Tony Kahn:

No, I'm serious. Is it because you really need a certain amount of time to get connected with these things?

Kito Robinson:

I am ... yes. I think it's a really good point. I think I'm at the stage of my life where I, I really want to connect with the man that I love, and think about my future, and spend time being domestic, and be at home. And I think my sister's so eager to connect with everything she can. And I think my grandfather's concerned that he's losing touch, so he tries to connect with everything he can, and I'm in a place where I want some isolation and get a little away from kind of the hecticness, the nature of the world around me, which is confusing and a little scary at times, and how does work and personal, how does that all work together. [Tony murmurs in agreement.] My sister's not thinking about that, nor is my grandfather, or my mom.

Tony Kahn:

You know, this is curious. You sort of are saying that your sister and your grandfather can easily put on an iPod because it connects them with the world and you can't put it on because it disconnects you from the person you want to be with.

Kito Robinson:

It's absolutely, that's absolutely right. Personally, I crave more time to kind of enjoy life and enjoy the end of my twenties and the beginning of my thirties. And kind of savor what, what it's going to be like before I have children and when I have children, and it's, it's funny. I'll tell you a story. I actually went to Target the other day because I'd joined a gym, and I thought, you know, what I want to do is find time in the morning where I can, I can actually listen to the local news and connect with kind of my local community. And I went to Target thinking, "Okay, I'm going to find a little radio." And I had to ask three different sales people, "Do you have a radio? Do you have something that I can, that I can use just to connect to the local news, what's going on right now around me?" There were so many Mp3 players and so many iPods; I couldn't find a mini radio, just so that in the morning I could listen to the news. Because when you go to the gym, you can tell, everyone has the white wires. White wire means iPod.

Tony Kahn:

We just got a great, wonderful radio for picking up the local news. It was a Christmas gift for my son from some friends of ours in New York. It's great. You can even put it in the shower. It's built like a Sherman tank.

Kito Robinson:

Oh, my goodness.

Tony Kahn:

It's like something that says, "I am here and I belong." You know when that was given to him? Seven years ago, and he forgot to pick it up at Christmas. So we ran into those people again. They said, "We saved Andrew's Christmas gift. Here it is." It's an antique.

Kito Robinson:

Seven years old. You're using it.

Tony Kahn:

Oh yeah. It's taking up half of the bathroom.

Kito Robinson:

See, there's something that I really love about listening to the same thing at the same time.

Tony Kahn:

Your sister may be hearing this when it finally is a podcast ...

Kito Robinson:

Yes.

Tony Kahn:

... and you may not be hearing it as a podcast.

Kito Robinson:

Absolutely.

Tony Kahn:

Anything you'd like to tell your sister that she can pick up on, on the podcast?

Kito Robinson:

[Laughs] That I love her and she shouldn't stress out about college because she's a wonderful human being who has a lot of intelligence, and, and that I learn a lot from her. Because, I'm sure when she hears this on a, as a podcast she will call me and teach me to try this as a podcast, and that's important, 'cause you also don't want to get left behind.

Tony Kahn:

What's her name?

Kito Robinson:

Kyla.

Tony Kahn:

Kyla? Kyla, listen to your sister.

Kito Robinson:

[Laughs] Thank you.

Tony Kahn:

Kito, thanks so much.

Kito Robinson:

Thank you, Tony. Pleasure to be here. Bye.

Tony Kahn:

I'm here in the studio also with Gary Mott, my right-hand man. Gary, one of the things that strikes me about that conversation with Kito is that this new technology is disrupting absolutely everything. I mean, here she is, a person in her late twenties, early thirties, and she's like an old-timer in terms of technology, and here I am sixty and I'm like the new kid on the block. It does not make any sense to me. You're what, thirty-five. Right?

Gary Mott:

I'm thirty-six, Tony.

Tony Kahn:

Thirty-six. You don't look it.

Gary Mott:

Well. Well. Don't look a day over thirty-five, huh? [Tony laughs]

Tony Kahn:

Not a moment. But, I mean, if there hadn't have been this job, would you be listening to an iPod right now?

Gary Mott:

You know, probably not. I mean, ...

Tony Kahn:

And why? What's missing or what isn't there? Yeah, what's missing either in you or in the iPod experience that would make you think, "Nah!"

Gary Mott:

Well, I mean, first of all, time, the time it takes to be into this stuff. I have very little time, you know. I've got three young kids, and whatever time I do have, I spend with my wife. [Tony murmurs in agreement.] Something that Kito said, that I had never

thought about, letting things happen to you in real time, and being part of a community that is, you know, watching a television program, listening to a radio show in real time and that was important to her.

Tony Kahn:

And every time I hear a story from somebody who has gotten a real experience with this technology, it's different; it's a different story.

Gary Mott:

Speaking of stories, Tony. . .

Tony Kahn:

Yes, speaking of stories, we got a "Happy New Year" greeting from Ken in Japan. He says, "A little while ago I discovered your podcast *Morning Stories*. Thank you very much and the best part about your broadcast, or podcast, is that everybody's story is different, yet there's something you can understand and share." Well, thanks a lot Ken.

Gary Mott:

We also got a very touching note from Sharon in Wisconsin. "I can't tell you how much *Morning Stories* have meant to me since I discovered them just this month. The holidays have been unexpectedly difficult for me this year. Two of my three teenaged sons decided to join the Army this summer. And with their impending deployments to Iraq, I have been feeling sorry for myself, for them, and the state of the world. *Morning Stories* have given me inspiration, enlightenment, and more to think about than just the here and now of our own dramatic story. Thank you so very much for that. Sharon."

Tony Kahn:

We also heard from Pennsylvania, a person who writes about Ann Robertson, the wonderful storyteller for our Christmas story, *Noel, Noel*. Our correspondent writes, "I really appreciated her style and what a powerful, simple, perfect Christmas tale. Could you bring her back for Groundhog Day? [Tony laughs] If we could get her to Punxi, Pennsylvania," I guess, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, the full name, "for a podcast, I'd be happy to help. We live two hours from there. Hope you find much happiness and good health" she writes, "in 2006."

Gary Mott:

You know, Tony, something that we noticed recently on iTunes; we went to the *Morning Stories* archive ...

Tony Kahn:

Right.

Gary Mott:

... and we see now they have a customer review ...

Tony Kahn:

Yes they do.

Gary Mott:

... link there.

Tony Kahn:

There's actually now a way you can not only talk back to us, if you like the show, but you can, you can send your comments about the podcast to Apple's iTunes store, if you'd like.

Gary Mott:

Or, send us an email at <morningstories@wgbh.org>. Seemingly easier, but, you never know.

Tony Kahn:

Either way, though, we do appreciate you and we appreciate our funder, Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software and our sponsor pretty much since this podcast began. If you want more information on them, check out Ipswitch at their website <Ipswitch.com> I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H.

Gary Mott:

Happy New Year, Tony!

Tony Kahn:

Happy New Year, Gary.

Gary Mott:

It's going to be another, another great one. I know it; I feel it.

Tony Kahn:

And for the rest of you who are looking for something to feel, tune in next Friday and we'll see you then. Take care. Bye-bye.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by Susan MacLeod