Matt Bowles: My guest today is Jeff Jenkins. He is an award-winning content creator, speaker, philanthropist, and travel influencer. He is the founder of Chubby Diaries, an online community that encourages and motivates plus-size people to travel the world and live life now. Jeff is also the chairperson of the Black Travel Alliance, whose mission is to support content creators of color and hold travel brands accountable for their lack of diversity within the travel industry. Originally from Orlando, Florida, Jeff has now traveled to over 35 countries and was awarded the Best in Travel 2021 Diversity Inclusion Award by Lonely Planet. He is the founder of an umbrella nonprofit that builds water wells in Rwanda. And Jeff has been featured in Forbes, Essence, Travel + Leisure, the New York Times, USA Today, and many other publications. Jeff, welcome to the show.

Jeff Jenkins: Brother, I'm glad to be here, man.

Matt Bowles: I am so excited to have you here. Can I just start off by saying that I am such a fan of your content because the energy that you bring is so positive. And every time I watch one of your videos on Instagram, I know my day is just going to pick up a notch, man. So let me just start off by appreciating you for what you're doing, man.

Jeff Jenkins: Appreciate you. Thank you so much for even saying that. You know what's been very interesting? I have been getting that so much lately about my energy, and I realized that there's so like, people are attracted to energy, they're attracted to positive energy. And so, it's really cool to hear you say it. Although we've never met, but to hear you say that, I'm still giving that.

Matt Bowles: I love that 100%, bro. And you and I have a number of friends in common, some of whom have been on the podcast. So, we roll in a lot of the same circles. And it's been really, really fun to follow you lately and really kind of go through your content. And I want to actually start off though with sort of going way back with your story because I don't know your entire background and story. And I'd love for you to be able to share some of this with our audience as we go through it. I know you grew up in Orlando. Can you take us back and start us there? As you were growing up in Orlando, what was that like for you? And as you think back to that, where did your desire to travel the world come from?

Jeff Jenkins: Well, yeah, I mean being from Mickey Mouse country is what I like to call it. My dad actually is a chef. Well, he—oh, never mind. I can't say that anymore. He's a retired chef from Disney World. He was there over 30 years. He actually just retired two weeks ago. But yeah, it's been very interesting. I love Orlando. Orlando was definitely different from other parts of Florida. But my love for or that desire for traveling started when I was very young. We would do road trips and I mean talking road trips like down the street to like Tampa or something. But I also did go with my dad to New Jersey and we would drive all the way from Orlando to the south part of Jersey. So that's where like that love and that desire to travel, being on the road, being able to go experience new cities and meet new people, I think that's where that like all birthed from.

Matt Bowles: And then I know you went to Florida A and M University for college, which I would love for you to talk about because I know a bunch of FAMU rattlers actually and I have done a bunch of international travel with them. So, I love your people. I was excited to see that you went there. And I would also like to just ask you, I mean in starting to ask you about experienced, just to sort of contextualize that because we have listeners in about 130 countries.

Jeff Jenkins: Wow.

Matt Bowles: So, if you can explain sort of the significance of HBCUs in general to our international audience and then also talk about your decision to attend FAMU in particular and what impact that had on you.

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah. So FAMU was life changing all the way. I can say that if I didn't go to FAMU, I would not be in the position that I am today. And one of the main reasons is because that's where I actually got my opportunity to go on my first international trip. But the thing that I love about FAMU and why HBCUs are so significant is because here in America, even when I was in school, going through grade school, from kindergarten to 12th grade, I actually didn't have a lot of teachers that looked like me. And so being able to come up in a system where majority of the people were. My teachers were like white Americans. I never got to experience having an education from a black American. And I was a former teacher, high school teacher, and I taught. And the one thing that you. I'm not saying that what white people teach is wrong or anything like that, but the one part and the big part of teaching comes from experiences. And so, if a teacher can relate with a student by just, like, how they were, like, their upbringings, a student actually is on track to learn even more. And so going to a HBCU, I got those experiences from being with all black teachers. And that was something that I never experienced before. But then also being at a school where the majority of the people at the school were black, predominantly black, and the cultures within the black community, a lot of times we try to tell people this, or we consistently are saying this now, that black people aren't monoethnic. We're diverse with. Even in our own race. And so, to be able to understand my identity more at HBCU was just great. And I love the experiences because there's so many different, like, traditional things that HBCU students do. Even if you didn't go to Florida A and M University and you went to another HBCU, we still had some of the same, like, traditions like homecoming and is, like, very big in a HBCU or we have those exposition games that we play with different rivalries that were just all about, like, the Battle of the Bands and things like that. So, it was great experience. I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Matt Bowles: And you mentioned that is what got you to take your first international trip. Can you take us through that story in terms of how that came about and where your first international trip was and what was that experience like?

Jeff Jenkins: So, yeah, so I did a program while I was in school called *Camp Adventure*. And what it was college students would be contracted by the American government to go work on American military bases all around the world. And so, my first place that I got stationed at was Yokosuka, Japan, and then Okinawa, Japan. And when I tell y' all I had one of the greatest times of my life, it was like, right when I got off the airplane and I was in the city is when I realized, like, the travel bug hit me right then, because I was like, yo, I've never been on a plane this long. And then to be on this plane for 11 or 12 hours and to be. I was just in Atlanta, now I'm in Tokyo, Japan. It blew my mind. So, I was like, yo, the world is a lot smaller than I thought. And then even just to see, I was inundated by Japanese, like billboards and people and their cars looked a little bit different. So, I was like, oh, my God, I love this. And so, Japan did not fail me. I love their tradition; I love their culture. The food, the way that they present the food every single time you eat was just great. And it was just, just great experience. I always tell people Japan is my favorite country, and I've been back since and it still continues to be my favorite country. And I can't tell if it was because it was the first country I went to, but I definitely can say that Japan is different from other countries I've been to, especially even East Asian countries.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, 100% agree. Japan is also one of my favorite countries. I've been probably three times in the last three years for a total of about three months. I was based in Tokyo for a month. I was based in

Osaka for a month. I was based in Kyoto for a month and got to travel around a little bit on shorter side trips throughout the country as well, and just blew me away. I mean, it's such a special place. And you are right. I mean, the food in Japan, you would be hard pressed to find food anywhere in the world that would compete with Japan. So, it is such a treat every time I go there. And the different places I go in Japan are also quite different. I mean, Kyoto versus Tokyo, I mean, very different vibes, but absolutely spectacular. So, what would you say would be sort of your highlights from Japan or any tips that you might have if somebody's going to go to Japan, maybe even for the first time, you know, what do they definitely have to do?

Jeff Jenkins: I mean, eat. That's the first. Yeah, go find the first restaurant that looks decent, go in there and grub. And I love how, like, even at some of the restaurants, like, that was such a culture shock to me. Where in America we're very prone to having, like, our own meals. It's never like, let's share some of the same things, or like, let's order a whole bunch of food and then eat it together. I love that about Japan. I would say just visiting Tokyo is great. Going to Hiroshima is great. I mean, it's great in the sense of learning about the history of Hiroshima. I think people call it Hiroshima here. I also love Okinawa. Okinawa, Japan. That's like the Hawaii of Japan. And Okinawans are. They don't really consider themselves Japanese, although they are. Okinawans are their own people, and they're like, the longest living people in the world. And just their culture is a little bit different as well, but it's more of, like, a. Of a hippie island place. But it's very tropical, very beautiful. It was home to the world's largest aquarium for. For a while, and then it's been trumped by so many other countries now who have made beautiful aquariums.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, well, the other place I want to ask you about that I have not yet been is Rwanda. I know you've spent time there, and you're involved in some nonprofit advocacy stuff there. I went to East Africa for my first time in 2018, and I did go to Uganda and Tanzania, both of which border Rwanda, but I did not actually get to Rwanda. So, I would love to hear what was your experience like in Rwanda and maybe talk about the, you know, the project that you're up to with the wells.

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah, so Rwanda's great. That was one of the first times, actually. That was the first African country I went to. Seeing a whole bunch of black people as the. Like, that run the country, that was a whole culture shock for me as well. That's something I've just never seen in my life. And I was like, this is crazy. I love it. But Rwanda is the land of a thousand hills. It's beautiful. Beautiful. A lot of agriculture there. The people are very friendly. The one thing that they do that I think is, like, very funny, is how they acknowledge you. Like, if you were, like, listening to somebody talk, you'll, like, shake your head or something like, oh, okay, yeah. And you, like, nod a little bit. But the way that they do it, they actually go about it with their eyebrows. So, you know how, like, we, like, you kind of, like, flirt with somebody and you, like, lift your eyebrows up like. Ah, yeah, Like. Like Home Alone kind of thing.

Matt Bowles: Right.

Jeff Jenkins: They do that as their acknowledgement and, like, as you're talking, so it's a little awkward at first because you're like, this is. This is a little bit uncomfortable. But once again, you get used to it and you learn it. But yeah, the project that I did is called the Amazing Project. And amazing means water in Rwandan. And so, I went on a mission trip. And while I was on the mission trip, my friends and I came back and were like, wow, these people need water. And so, we ended up starting a water well project to build water wells. Unfortunately, right now the pandemic has put all of that on hold. But I am still doing work in Rwanda will soon, once we can get some things going. I'm still going to partner with people in Rwanda, but I also just got brought on to a board for East African Energy Solution where they build biodigesters which

are a sustainable way to cook your food. And it's been great to be a part of that, but it's like I really do want to help the people in that area in East Africa. So.

Matt Bowles: Awesome, man. I love that. The other thing I want to talk to you about is this whole concept of budget travel because I know that you have found some incredible hacks and techniques and ways to make world travel a lot cheaper than many people think it has to be. And I'm wondering, now that you've been to 35 plus countries, can you share some of your travel hacks and tips for people that want to do more world travel but they feel like they're on a tight budget?

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah. So, the way that I explain it and the way that I go about it more so is I let the deals dictate where I go. This is what I learned. I remember one of my friends said, oh, I'm going on this trip and I spent this amount of money and it was a deal that came through. And so, I was like, oh, how much did you spend? Okay, it was $1,000. I was like, you know what I'm going to do? I'm just going to save $1,000 and. And I'm going to wait to see if that deal ever comes back up. And so that's what I started doing when it came down to budgeting, it was like, when I saw the deal, I got the deal like immediately because sometimes it was only a day or two that you had to even get the deal. And so that literally can cut a trip down in half or about 30 to 40%. And so that's one thing that I always go about. I also use credit card. Credit card points is a great way to get airline tickets for free or even get cheap seats. So, like, for me, I went to Bali, Indonesia for less than 40 bucks. But yeah, I've just learned staying in hostels is such a great way to spend your time. Even if you want to have a private room, it can cost less than staying at a hotel. And yeah, there are so many little tricks and tips when it comes down to like Budget traveling.

Matt Bowles: I love it, man. All right, so let's talk about your brand, Chubby Diaries.

Jeff Jenkins: Yes.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, man, let's get into that. I mean, and I want you to take us back a little bit before the founding of the brand and talk about how and why you selected the plus-size travel niche. What were you observing was the void that you were able to fill in the need that wasn't there? I mean, talk about sort of how you decided and came up with the brand and then talk about the brand and what type of content value you deliver today.

Jeff Jenkins: Yes. So, when I was in Rwanda and we went to go build those water wells, I remember being there and it was just like you had this moment because there's no, like Internet and you can't be on your phone. It's a lot of introspection happening. So, I remember looking out into the land of a thousand hills and I said to myself, I said, hey, I want to travel the world, help people and get paid to do it. And that's where that moment stuck in my head. And I was like, okay, so what am I going to do? How am I going to do this? And so, I was like, I want to be an entrepreneur. And this is my unorthodox way of going about it is by being a travel blogger or a travel expert, doing what I'm doing now. Because I actually had a friend who quit her six-figure job to actually go into like travel influencer blogger. And she was doing very well. So, I was like, you know what, I'm going to try this too. So, then it came down to like picking a niche. What would my niche be? Because as I was like looking up stuff on Google and that's what I always tell people. People always asking that question of, oh, how did you get started? How did you do it? Like, what did you do first? Like, how do I get started? I was like, well, what you need to do is just Google, Google as much stuff as you can get on YouTube. All of that is like helpful information. But everybody kept saying, find a niche, find a niche, find a niche. And I was like, I don't know how to find a niche. And so, I have a cousin who is a PR person who does things, she helps brands and businesses out. And she, I hit her up and told her, I was like, hey,

this is what I'm thinking about doing. I need to figure out a niche. And so she was like, yo, I got this three questionnaire thing I want you to fill out. And so I filled it out and I was like, I have nothing. I feel like I got nothing out of this. And she was like, no, look again. She was like, yo, you're like fat and black. There you go. And I literally thought to myself, I was like, oh, my gosh. I don't know anybody who talks about like plus-size travel. Once I recognized it, my brain just like exploded with just like thinking about like, oh my God, I can do this, I can do that. I don't know anybody doing that. I don't know anybody doing that. So that's when I realized, and I dived in more to it and realized that, wow, the travel industry really is not accommodating to plus-size travelers. And I want to talk about it. So I saw that there was a need and I wanted to meet that need. And so that's how like Chubby Diaries kind of got started.

Matt Bowles: And can you talk a little bit about what specifically those needs are? How are the needs of plus-size travelers not being met? And what does Chubby Diaries. So when people go to your website, they follow you online, you know, they become part of the community. What types of value do you provide for your community?

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah, so I mean, the things that we provide is content, community, and tours that hopefully will get going again late 2021, early 2022. So, when it comes down to there being a lack of accessibility within the travel space, the one thing that plus-size people, majority of plus-size people have an issue with is flights. Like, I have friends. Like I had a friend yesterday or two days ago literally text me and was like, hey, what do I do? Because I'm afraid to get on a flight. And she's a plus-size woman. She's been following me for a while. But when it comes down to flights, we all know that flights, like the seats seem like they're shrinking. They're trying to jam pack as many people as they can. Especially now that a lot of these people, a lot of these airlines are taking the budget route, like a lot of these budget airlines are and doing that economy kind of seat where it's like less leg room and they can fit in a couple of more seats. So that's one thing. But then also excursions, there's weight limits, there's size restrictions. And these metrics of like weight limits and size restrictions are from like people from back in the day around the world. People are getting larger, period. And it doesn't really matter to me. Like, I'm not here to promote obesity, but my main Thing is to promote people to live life. Now, it might take somebody two, three years to get to their ideal weight or maybe never get there, but does that mean you stop living now? So, I'm trying to talk to people where they're at right now and say, hey, travel is made for everybody. So, I'm talking to the brands and to my audience and communities and trying to say, hey, let's figure out a way to where we can make things more accommodating. Because there's a lot of money in this market. Because even for me, my demographic majority of them, the average income is over $51,000. And I did a little survey that showed that if travel brands were able to make things a little bit more accommodating for plus-size people, I asked them, would they take another trip, like an extra trip on top of the trip that they already had planned. And literally 98% of them said yes. So that just shows you that, hey, there is a boundary. There's something there, an obstacle that's there that can probably be addressed and that will open up the floodgates for more travelers in a demographic that you probably aren't even meeting.

Matt Bowles: So, Jeff, with all your travel experiences thus far and lessons learned and everything else for plus-sized folks that may be listening to this podcast right now, can you break down some of your top tips and maybe even for people that are in the earlier part of their travel journey or they're aspiring travelers, what would be your top tips for. For the plus-size community?

Jeff Jenkins: Well, this one falls for the plus-size and the people that's just starting Research, research, research, research. I always tell people, go do your research, especially as a plus-size person. A lot of

times now people have these brands or excursions are really doing a good job at putting like dimensions or letting you know ahead of time, like, what they have. So, like I went great white shark diving in South Africa and I got on the website and I think they only had like a wetsuit up to like an extra-large. And I'm a 3x, so I was like, I've also never seen anybody that's my size wearing a wetsuit. So, this is one thing that Chubby Diaries also does is that we try like my whole purpose is to be like representation to a group of people. So now I had to go do the research. I had to go find out that there's an American company that does wetsuits, larger wetsuits, and I was able to buy one of those larger wetsuits and I was able to fit that larger wetsuit. So, if I didn't do my research before and found out they only had the extra-large, I would have gotten to South Africa and went to the place which took over an hour and a half to get to and would have had to just sit on the boat and not be able to swim at all or to be able to get in the water because I didn't have a wetsuit. So, I always tell people, do your research. The other thing is, with plus-size, I would say look at the customer-of-size policies that all of the American airlines have. Every one of them has a customer size policy. And some of the best ones are Southwest. Southwest has by far the best one to where, like, if you need an extra seat, if you purchase two seats, they'll actually reimburse you on a seat. And if you don't do that and you just go up to the gate, you can ask then and say, hey, is there an extra seat available? Because I would like to sit there. And they will reserve a seat for you if the plane is not full. And if it is full, they'll try to get you on the next flight so that you can have an extra seat.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. The other thing I want to go through as well is your entrepreneurial transition. You mentioned you were in Rwanda, had a major impact on you. You started to realize that you would really love and prefer to be able to travel the world full time and build a way to, you know, finance that and build a business so that could deliver you your ideal dream lifestyle. There's obviously a lot of people that are in that exact position right now, but you actually did it. You actually executed on it, and you're now living that. So can you talk about that transition process when you realize, this is really what I want to do, this is what my dream lifestyle would look like. How do I now create that? And you talked about how you identified the niche that you wanted to go into, but from there, what were the next steps to actually building a business and monetizing it so that it could finance your lifestyle?

Jeff Jenkins: Well, yeah, it was, to be honest. It was like I had to go learn, like a business model. Like, I could put a business plan together, but it wasn't comprehensive. It wasn't going to help me because it was just like what I saw, like everybody else do. And to be in the travel space as a travel influencer, there really wasn't that many business plans out there to emulate. So, for me, what I had to do was I had to go learn for some of the best that were doing well in the travel blogger influencer space. And so, I started like asking them the questions. I started going to conferences, reading books, and like taking all of those ideas and bringing them together. And when I figured out that like, okay, this is how bloggers and influencers make their money, a lot of them make it from brand partnerships. They're influencers. So, they work with these different businesses and the businesses, they do a partnership together. And if they promote their stuff online, you get paid for that. And so, I got into that. That's my main source of income. I also have the tours. We had just did the Bali tour, we just did the Thailand tour. And that actually brings in a significant amount of money to where we're taking 20 people at $1250 on a trip and you get a 70% profit out of that 1250 per person. Those are like my main ways of generating money. Hopefully we'll be able to pick it back up in 2021. But yeah, those are like two of my main ways of making money.

Matt Bowles: That's awesome, man. And then as you mentioned, that all changed in 2020 with the COVID 19 pandemic, and that really hit the, the travel industry hard. And anybody that makes money on anything related to travel. Can you talk about the impact that had on you and what you were able to do or how you pivoted so that you were able to sustain yourself through 2020?

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah, so I was in a business accelerator called DEV Inc. Here in Austin, Texas, and we literally started right as the pandemic started. And so, while I was in the course, thank God I was. It was beautiful to be in it because it was three months long and it was the first three months of the pandemic. So, it kept me focused, it kept me productive during that time. But the one thing that I got out of it and what I said I was going to do, I was like, huh, you know what? I'm just going to be an influencer again. Like, that's what I can do for now. That's the. I see that's the way of making money still and make myself a thought leader during this time, like establish myself as more of a thought leader in the travel as a whole and in plus-size travel. I was already doing it technically for plus-size travel, but travel as a whole, because a lot of people were asking like, okay, what are we going to do during this time? Like, what is travel? What are your projections on where travel will be in the next months? Or next year or three years down the road. And so, a lot of people wanted to know, so I was giving it to them, you know, and that's what I did. I ended up being able to start speaking on different conferences. Even when the Black Lives Matter movement was going, I got to talk about diversity within the travel space a lot. And we also started Black Travel Alliance through that. I'm one of the co-founders of Black Travel Alliance, so all of that actually boosted my profile in a way. It boosted eyes being, like, on me, and I'm actually doing way better, like, significantly better than I was before the pandemic.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. Well, let's definitely talk about the Black Travel Alliance. I've interviewed some of your co-founders on this podcast as well. But for folks where this is their first-time hearing about it, can you talk about what the Black Travel Alliance is, the mission, and what you guys are up to?

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah. So, the Black Travel Alliance was birthed out of people putting the black squares on their pages. And so, for us, as, like, just black people that were, like, in the travel space, we were like, hey, we've never seen this brand ever mention anything about black people and the wellness of black people. And we were like, okay, we can't tell if this is like a. Or just like, something that they just want to do just so they can seem cool and feel like they're not left out kind of thing or get whatever. So, we were like, okay, what can we do? And so, we started. It was 17 of us. I actually host a mastermind every Friday. So, we use the time during our mastermind to figure out, like, what can we do? And Black Travel Alliance was formed from that. And what we do is we hold brands accountable, and we want to see more black people represented in campaigns, in the media, speakers at conferences. And so, yeah, so we have that. We also are in a place of being able to help black creators within the travel space, since on average, Black creators get 50 to 60% less than their white counterparts, which for the same kind of campaign. So, we're trying to show and support black creators in this space. And we just had an event two weeks ago called Wavelength where we did like, a whole, like, networking, speed dating with brands. So, brands were able to come in and just work or get to meet black creators within the space. Because one of the things that we've heard a lot of is like, well, I put it out there, but I don't know any black creators. So, we were like, okay, we can be conduits to help Brands and our audiences come together or these black creators come together. So yeah, that's Black Travel Alliance. We also have this research project that we did that just came out. It shows that over $100 billion was spent alone by African Americans within the United States on travel. And so that's $40 billion more than what the last research showed. And we actually felt like that research wasn't comprehensive enough and it only took it from I believe, like 500 people where ours was almost 4,000.

Matt Bowles: That's awesome, man. So, I want to ask for your tips, particularly for black travelers that may be listening to this podcast right now. What advice or tips do you have particularly for black folks that may be at the early stage of their world travel journey?

Jeff Jenkins: First thing I would say is go do it. Like just, just get out there. It's not as scary as you think. Actually, statistically, there's some studies that show that black Americans are safer in other countries than being in America. So, I think that's one of the biggest fears that black Americans have is will I be safe going to another country? And I can tell you, yes, you can be. The other thing is, is like, yeah, get on Instagram, look at other people, like watch YouTube, see other people do the same things that you want to do. And it actually eases your nerves a lot, especially on YouTube, because there are a lot of people like to vlog, and they usually will show you the place that you want to go. And a lot of times there's, I mean YouTube has it all. YouTube definitely will show you like if there's an island you want to visit off the coast of Africa, somebody on YouTube has been to that place and they're probably going to show you around. And it's like you get like step by step help on like what's there. And so yeah, I always tell people to do your research in that way as well, to go visually get a better look at it. And that usually eases a lot of people's nerves.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. Well, I want to ask you, Jeff, I mean, let's just go back to the pre-Covid period here. I mean the pandemic notwithstanding, in regular times, once you were able to create that location, independent lifestyle for yourself and that freedom of mobility, how did you design your lifestyle for you? What was your ideal travel cadence? How did you choose where to go, how long to stay, day, how often were you traveling, etc?

Jeff Jenkins: It was all about the trends. From what I'm learning about social media marketing, promotions and things like that, it's always whatever's Trendy, you know. So, I was actually basing majority of my travel off of the trends. So, if it was Bali this year or this at this moment, I was in Bali. If it was Tulum, I was in Tulum. So, I was just trying out and visiting just different places around the world or going to these different places around the world. And I was gone two to three weeks out of the month. My schedule was like, it felt like I was living out a backpack. I promise you. Like, it really went just like this. I would get home, have my suitcase, go wash clothes and then repack my suitcase and was back out again. That's how it definitely went. And I did a lot of short trips. I try not to do a lot of long-term trips. And I had literally just got to a point where I was like, ah, I don't think I want to be going longer than like seven, ten days out of the at one time in one destination. So, I would definitely come back a lot quicker because that was a part of just who I was. And like, my brand was that I was helping people for those, like, small trips that they can take during, like for vacation with their PTO. So, it wasn't like the digital nomad life where I'm traveling around and I'm staying in a country for four or five months. So yeah, that's how my life was back then.

Matt Bowles: So, let me ask you this now, Jeff, just sort of big picture. At this point in your life, after all of the travel experiences you've had, why do you choose to travel in general? What do you get out of it? What does travel mean to you?

Jeff Jenkins: Well, yeah, it's a part of my personality. I've done Myers Briggs and taking this life language assessment and strength finders. And it always comes back to my personality. I'm very positive. I actually think positive. I'm very optimistic is what I was actually trying to say. And I really get so much energy from people. And so, for me, travel is so ideal about going to meet new people, going to experience in new countries. And it's that spontaneous, adventurous kind of zeal that's there. Like, it just gets me excited. So, I love trying new things. And so, it just, it all satisfies my cravings or my personality and like, who I am as a

person. So that's why I like traveling a lot. I love meeting new people. I really do. It's one of my favorite things.

Matt Bowles: I love that, man. That's an awesome answer. All right, Jeff, at this point, are you ready to move into *The Lightning Round*.

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah, let's do it.

Matt Bowles: Let's do it. All right. What is one book that has significantly influenced you over the years that you'd most recommend people check out?

Jeff Jenkins: In a heartbeat? The 10X Rule by Grant Cardone. That book literally changed my life.

Matt Bowles: All right, if you could have dinner with any one person who's currently alive today that you've never met, just you and that person for an extended dinner and conversation, who would you choose?

Jeff Jenkins: I would like to sit down with GaryVee.

Matt Bowles: Okay, nice. I came across GaryVee. I met him probably 11 years ago.

Jeff Jenkins: Oh, wow.

Matt Bowles: I was at a conference and he was the keynote speaker. It was probably 2009. I'd never heard of him, you know, and it was kind of like the end of the day, we're like, you know, should we stay for this or not? I've never really heard of this guy. Well, let's stay for five minutes and see if he's any good. And then GaryVee comes on with, like, all of his energies and lights up the stage and you're just captivated for every minute of it.

Jeff Jenkins: Oh, my gosh.

Matt Bowles: And we were just like, oh, my gosh. So, yeah, that was probably a good 10 years ago or so and, you know, got to, you know, shake his hand. And from that day on, I've been following him and watching all of his content, but he's a pretty extraordinary person to follow for sure.

Jeff Jenkins: That's amazing.

Matt Bowles: All right, if you could go back in time, Jeff, knowing everything that you know now, and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Jeff?

Jeff Jenkins: You can do it by yourself? Like, don't. You don't have to wait on anybody. You can just do it by yourself. You don't have to ask for permission. Just go.

Matt Bowles: Awesome.

Jeff Jenkins: I think that was the one thing that really got me caught up a lot of times. Like, I grew up in church and I felt like for some reason, like, I had to ask for permission to do something in life or I needed approval before I can actually go out and do it. And not knowing that I can make the plan and people, for some reason hops on board. And I realized that people really don't want to, like, be that invested in you. Like, they want you to go out and do your own thing anyway. So, yes, do your own thing, buddy.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. All right, Jeff, of all the places that you have now traveled to, what are your top three favorite travel destinations you would most recommend people check out.

Jeff Jenkins: I would definitely tell them to go to Japan. You can just go to all of Japan, Italy, and New York City. If you ain't been to New York City, you got to go. That's my spot.

Matt Bowles: I love that, brother. And let me just tell you, you and I share a really deep and profound love for New York. We've both traveled all over the world. We've seen a lot of epic stuff. New York City, though, for me, has a really special place in my heart. I know it does for you. So let me just ask you if you can expand on that. What is it about New York? Why is New York so different and so special? And what does New York City mean?

Jeff Jenkins: I mean, I've done this so many times where I have literally went to New York with no plans and had the greatest time of my life with a schedule packed for chock full of just stuff to do. New York, there was always something to do. They called it the city that never slept, and it definitely didn't sleep. It really was. And so, it was just it's a different vibe. It's totally different from any other country. I've been to our city. I've been to around the world. The people there are just different. And there's so many different cultures there, so it's like you really get to experience something. And it's just so many people there too. Like, I remember the first time I went to New York, and I was like, wow, you can turn a corner There's like hundreds, not even or even thousands of people when you come around that corner. Being on the subway, the food is amazing. Yeah, I just. There's so much to love about New York, and so, yeah, and once again, I get to meet a lot of people. Yeah.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. 100% Agree. All right, Jeff, what are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you've never been. You most want to go highest on your list.

Jeff Jenkins: Antarctica is one man. Australia. Still want to go there. And I would go with Ethiopia.

Matt Bowles: Nice. That's a really, really good one, man. I was supposed to go to Ethiopia this year, and then Covid happened. So, I'm really hoping to get there in 2021. It is some of my favorite food in the world. I'll start there. Just unbelievable food. So, man, I'm so excited to go there. That's a great pick. All right, brother, last lightning round question. And that New York City was a good pivot for this one, because New York City, of course, is the birthplace of hip-hop music. And I'm about to ask you who your top five hip-hop MCs of all time are. But before I do that, let me just ask, have you publicly announced your top five MCs before? Does the Chubby Diaries community know Jeff Jenkins, top five hip-hop MCs, or will this be breaking news?

Jeff Jenkins: This is breaking news here, buddy.

Matt Bowles: Oh, man, we're going to have to do a press release or something, bro.

Jeff Jenkins: Don't anybody judge me for it, because these are big.

Matt Bowles: These are yours. These are yours and yours alone, brother. So, before you drop the five, though, let me just ask you what hip-hop music means to you and why you love hip-hop.

Jeff Jenkins: It means culture to me. Just speaking of Japan from earlier, I remember going to Japan, and I was in this fancy restaurant about 16 years ago. A lot of times when you go to a restaurant or a fancy restaurant, you get that little elevator music in the background in the distance. Why did I Hear Jay-Z's 99

problems? Come on. I got 99 problems with him. I was like, wait, do they know what they're playing right now? But to even see how Japanese culture was in love with, like, hip-hop, that, like, blew my mind. And so, it is a part of me. Like, I feel like hip-hop is a part of just, like, black culture in particular, But I love it. It's the sound, it's the groove, it's the. It's the coolness. So, yeah, I love everything about hip-hop.

Matt Bowles: Amazing, man. I love that. All right, Jeff, for the first time, announced to the world, who are your top five favorite hip-hop emcees of all time?

Jeff Jenkins: Number one, we'll start with the homies, Biggie, AKA Chubby Diaries. First, Chubby Diaries Chubster. So, then I'm going to go to Lil Wayne, number three, Drake, Kanye, and then two Chain. Like those. Those top five right there.

Matt Bowles: Nice, brother. I love that. Those are great picks, man. That's amazing. All right, Jeff, I want you to let people know how they can find you, how they can follow you. I want all. I want everybody. All my listeners to follow you, man, because as I said at the very end. Beginning of this episode, your content is so positive, and the energy that you bring, even if it's just, you know, watching you on a. On a quick video in the Instagram feed, it'll. It'll pick your day up. So, I want everybody to go follow you. And. And how should people come into your universe?

Jeff Jenkins: Yeah, they can follow me on Instagram; *chubbydiaries_*. The link will probably be in this podcast somewhere, but then also on chubbydiaries.com that's where I give all those tips, tricks and things like that for plus-size people. And speaking of just the positivity thing, we all know that 2020 has been a crazy year and a lot of people, I can't even tell if they're even excited about making New Year's resolutions because 2020 has smashed setting goals further out in the future. But the one thing that I'm trying to do and I've gotten a group of my friends together is I launched a podcast called Inspire 2021 so you can catch those episodes and you can find all 10 episodes by the end of the month on there.

Matt Bowles: Awesome. We are going to link up all of that information in the show notes folks. So, you can just go to one page, TheMaverickShow.com and just go to the show notes for this episode and there you're going to find all of Jeff's social media handles, the link to his podcast episodes, and everything else that we discussed in this episode in one place. Jeff, this was amazing man. Thank you for coming on the show.

Jeff Jenkins: Oh, thank you for having me. This is the greatest way to just like end my day. I've been up since like 6 working, so this is the perfect way to end it. I'm excited.

Matt Bowles: I appreciate you, brother. All right everybody, good night.