



# Stephen Tako

January 2023

VoyageLA

Today  
we'd  
like  
to  
introduce  
you  
to  
Stephen  
Tako

Hi Stephen, thanks for sharing your story with us. To start, maybe you can tell our readers some of your backstory.

Most of my adult life included a corporate side of me and a creative side as well. In 2010, I left a six-figure income to pursue my creative aspirations in Los Angeles. I booked many acting and hosting roles while earning the right to join the Screen Actors Guild during my first year in the entertainment industry.

In 2011, I played a yeti in a film and later that year wrote a fictitious story about how people misjudged and discriminated against him all his life. He was a dancing yeti who just wanted to bring joy to people, yet people treated him like a monster. The story started with him being a child as he traveled with his grandmother to a new mountain and the challenges they faced with the locals.

The stories eventually turned into three published books for children 4-7 years old and all have been adapted into short films as well. (Earning 7 International Film Festival Awards with many more Nominations.) Each storytelling adventure helps children with lessons such as overcoming bullying and discrimination, to helping them learn how to make friends, have courage, good sportsmanship and more.

Helping children overcome bullying issues has a personal meaning to me as I suffered much bullying when I was young. It wasn't until I was 21 that I decided to stop playing the victim role and to make an effort to forgive everyone and move forward with my life as an adult.

**WHO WE ARE**  
A youth-focused team of professionals and volunteers dedicated to reducing bullying and discrimination through storytelling and education.

**BE A LEADER**  
• Speak Up  
• Volunteer  
• Support Change

**FUNDRAISING**  
• Ask-Around  
• School Events  
• Youth Team Fundraising  
• Corporate Sponsorship

**WHAT WE DO**  
• Program Development  
• Organizational Support  
• Grant Writing  
• Marketing & Communications  
• Fundraising Support







I come across many adults who still hold on to anger and resentment for the bullying, neglect or even abuse from their childhoods and I hope I can inspire them with my work to finally heal. For children, I hope that my books and films will help them during their formative years to instill compassion and empathy so that less bullying and less school violence occurs.

In 2022, my fiancé and I co-founded Motivated To Act, a 501(c)3 organization that is working with schools to use anti-bullying curriculum based on the stories and characters from my Junga the Dancing Yeti® series of books and films. Since the most recent Junga book has a football and sportsmanship theme, we worked with five former NFL players to voice characters in the film adaptation. One of which was my hero when I was in high school!

After an eight years absence from the corporate world, I did return to my roots in the financial industry back in 2018 while simultaneously building the Junga the Dancing Yeti® brand and now Motivated To Act with my fiancé. It's been a very rewarding journey and I have much left to do. We are working with a charter school now and plan to introduce the full program on a national level later in 2023.

During my spare time, I continue to host The Los Angeles Movie Awards, the Los Angeles Cinema Festival of Hollywood and the NYLA International Film Festival. I've been the main host of these festivals since 2011. I will continue to write Junga stories and cast the talent for our films while volunteering as often as possible to share the stories with children.

**Would you say it's been a smooth road, and if not what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced along the way?**

There are more hurdles and obstacles than one would imagine. When I left a six-figure income to work as an actor, people thought I had lost my mind. Sometimes I wondered if I had as well... While living in a near-poverty existence, I had to remind myself that I was in that position because of my choice and that helped me keep my sanity. It kept my spirits hopeful knowing that at any time, I could throw the entertainment life aside and get back to the typical lifestyle that I had become accustomed to for many years.

Dealing with this obstacle was made worse by the fact that many of my friends and family were overly concerned about me and my career path. I didn't like having to explain or defend my actions or my sanity. On the flip side, it was good to know they cared.

Writing books and making films both have an enormous amount of details that require close attention. Bringing this all together now with the anti-bullying non-profit requires funding and finding the time to balance all of my responsibilities. I'm thankful for the wonderful people who have come into my life, but ultimately, the responsibility is still mostly mine and it can be overwhelming at times.

**Appreciate you sharing that. What else should we know about what you do?**

I'm most known for my work with the fictional children's anti-bullying character Junga the Dancing Yeti®. This is a character I started to develop in 2011 and in 2018 the first story was published into a book, Junga the Dancing Yeti. In 2020, I released the film adaptation of the first book and also published the 2nd book, Junga the Dancing Yeti Meets Heidi. The film adaptation of that book was released in 2021. In late 2022, the third book, Junga the Dancing Yeti in Yeti, Set, Go! was published and the film adaptation is due out in February or March 2023.

It's truly a passion project and I've been extremely fortunate to have so many talented people join the cast and crew! One of the best gifts I possess is in finding truly remarkable people to join us on this journey. The editor and illustrator are top notches and the international cast of voiceover actors is brilliant.

What sets me apart from others is my tenacity to persevere against the odds and to find a useful means for my creative work that can truly save lives. Helping children at a very vulnerable time in their lives is critical in the fight against violence at schools.

**So, before we go, how can our readers or others connect or collaborate with you? How can they support you?**

We are looking for Executive Producers to help us complete the film adaptation for Junga the Dancing Yeti in Yeti, Set, Go!

Our non-profit, Motivated To Act, will be having its launch Soiree in early 2023 in San Diego and we could use PR, media and we have other opportunities for interested parties to get involved.

Once our program is fully vetted in 2023, we will look to expand immediately in the Southern California region before springboarding into the national market for schools. We would like to collaborate now with public, private and homeschools in all of SoCal.

All donations to Motivated To Act go towards helping us develop these programs and to make them affordable to children of all economic levels.