

J. Daniel Gonzalez



BROOKE DUBOSE

“My girlfriend thinks helmets are sexy. Who knew?”

Age: 30

Occupation: Graduate Student in Media Studies at the New School for Social Research/ CHUNK 666 documenter/ Freelancer

Are you a T.A. member? I'm a T.A. believer.

Where do you commute to/from? Most rides originate in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Where I end up depends on the day, I suppose. The ride to school (Union Square area) I can do with my eyes closed now. I wouldn't, naturally.

What kind of bike do you have? Oooh, I have a whole corral full, ranging from "sensible" commuting and racing bikes to homemade choppers and tall bikes. I just picked up this Dutch commuter that after some love is going to be a workhorse! Panniers, baskets, a "hub" lock, and a kickstand! I'm psyched!

What kinds of gear do you use (not gears on bike, but lights, helmet, rain coat, etc.)? Elemental gear in different forms: sleek commuter lights on some, duct-taped flashlights and lacrosse pads on the fun bikes. Always a helmet, however I must admit they're not always CPSC certified. Plus, my girlfriend

thinks helmets are sexy. Who knew?

How long have you been commuting? Even before I was able to ride on my own, I was sitting on the back of my mom's bike on the way to daycare or to preschool. I was exposed to the elements of commuting without having to put in the effort. In second or third grade I passed my mom's cycling competency and safety test and was given the green light to do it on my own. Soccer practice, piano lessons, school, whatever.

Why did you start commuting by bike? When I first moved to New York I was feeling a little displaced and alienated from my immediate surroundings. Getting on a bike and being able to see the neighborhoods shift and being forced to interact with the community really changed my perspective and improved my mood dramatically. I felt connected to the city through the streets and found a good way to work off some tension and get some air after school or work.

Do you ride in all weather? Absolutely. Rain is the worst in its truth and consequence. I love riding in the snow for pioneering reasons and the relative quiet.

What's your riding style? Confident and comfortable.

What kind of response do you get from co-workers? My last day job was the best. Initially my co-workers were just shaking their heads in disbelief that I insisted on riding EVERY DAY. But without any sort of proselytizing, I was approached one by one for consultations about what kind of bike would be best for their commute and riding style. A bunch bought bikes, helmets and locks. I gave them maps and T.A. water bottles, and sent them off on their way! Management took notice and allowed everyone to park inside and even bought us a bike rack!

What is the best commute you can remember? Last summer I flew to Copenhagen for vacation. After putting my bike together at the airport, I was, I swear, emotionally MOVED to see a clearly marked bike lane leading from the airport into the city center. It was the evening commute and I was further moved by how many people and how many different types of people were out. Riders in business suits, cargo bikes full of kids, dogs and groceries, every type. After the initial shock of riding amongst so many people, I was thrilled and invigorated!

What was your worst experience/commute? NYPD "ticketing blitzes" are always disheartening. A few years ago I was pulled over on 6th Ave in midtown for being out of the bike lane. Looking ahead and behind me there was no lane available because of the double parking. What choice did I have? The ticket was thrown out in court, but the whole process was annoying.

Advice for new bicycle commuters: Cycling is an elegant and civil way to get around. Aggression and entitlement won't help you out on the streets.

Where do you park your bike? The school has plenty of racks in front of the buildings, but when those are full, parking meters or street signs are adequate. Remember to park away from the street side of things. I've lost a wheel or two to parallel parking.

What's the most memorable reaction you've gotten on your bike? When we go on "CHUNK" rides, the reactions we get recapture the essential freedom and joyfulness of riding a bike. People take note of the strange bikes and the smiling faces and want to get involved! We've had groups of kids chase us down because they want to try out the bikes - and we let them. □