

Digital Ownership Could Become the Next Human Right, says Will.i.am

The artist, entrepreneur, and futurist argues that personal data ownership may become one of the defining societal debates of the AI era.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, June 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, who should own the data that powers it?



will.i.am discusses digital ownership, artificial intelligence, and the future of human agency.

In a recent conversation with [Shekhar Natarajan](#) on [Tomorrow, Today](#), [will.i.am](#), founding member of the Black Eyed Peas and longtime technology entrepreneur, argued that ownership of personal data may become one of the defining rights debates of the AI era.

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Every person is creating a digital fingerprint. The question is who owns it.”

will.i.am

Every person is constantly creating a digital fingerprint through their actions, behaviors, preferences, communications, and online activity. As artificial intelligence becomes more dependent on that information, he argues individuals, not corporations, governments, or algorithms, should retain meaningful control over how that data is used, shared, and

monetized.

The discussion explored how modern technology has quietly become embedded in daily decision-making. Recommendation engines suggest what people watch, algorithms influence what they buy, and AI systems increasingly shape how information is consumed.

While these tools often provide convenience and efficiency, will.i.am questioned whether society has fully considered the long-term consequences of becoming overly dependent on algorithmic systems.

The conversation also examined the growing impact of artificial intelligence on employment.

As automation continues to expand across industries, will.i.am raised concerns that technological progress is often measured by efficiency gains while overlooking the human consequences of workforce disruption.

He questioned whether enough resources are being directed toward solving meaningful societal challenges, particularly in education, infrastructure, economic development, and underserved communities around the world.

Rather than using technology solely to replace existing work, he suggested that innovation should be focused on creating opportunity, expanding access, and solving problems that have remained unsolved for generations.

Despite raising concerns about the direction of AI development, will.i.am remains optimistic about humanity's future.

He argues that qualities such as imagination, empathy, creativity, compassion, and human judgment remain uniquely human and cannot simply be reduced to data points or algorithms.

The discussion ultimately centers on a broader question facing society: as artificial intelligence becomes more powerful, what aspects of human identity should remain exclusively our own?

"This conversation wasn't really about artificial intelligence," said Shekhar Natarajan. "It was about ownership, responsibility, and the choices we make as technology becomes increasingly intertwined with everyday life."

Additional topics discussed include AI governance, workforce automation, cultural identity, community development, education, and the future relationship between humans and intelligent systems.

The full episode is available now on YouTube and all major podcast platforms.

About:

will.i.am is a Grammy Award-winning artist, founding member of the Black Eyed Peas, technology entrepreneur, investor, and philanthropist. Throughout his career, he has combined creativity and technology, championing initiatives in artificial intelligence, education, and digital innovation while supporting programs that help underserved communities access new opportunities.

Shekhar Natarajan is the founder and CEO of Orchestro.AI and a former senior executive at American Eagle, Walmart, Target, and Disney, where he led global initiatives in technology and supply chain strategy. Tomorrow, Today applies that same systems-level thinking to global human questions, pairing high-profile guests with long-form, unscripted dialogue.

Tomorrow, Today with Shekhar Natarajan: The Show explores the defining questions shaping the future of humanity. Hosted by Shekhar Natarajan, the show features long-form conversations with entrepreneurs, innovators, policymakers, scientists, educators, and thought leaders discussing artificial intelligence, business, leadership, education, and the forces transforming society.

Shekar Natarajan

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