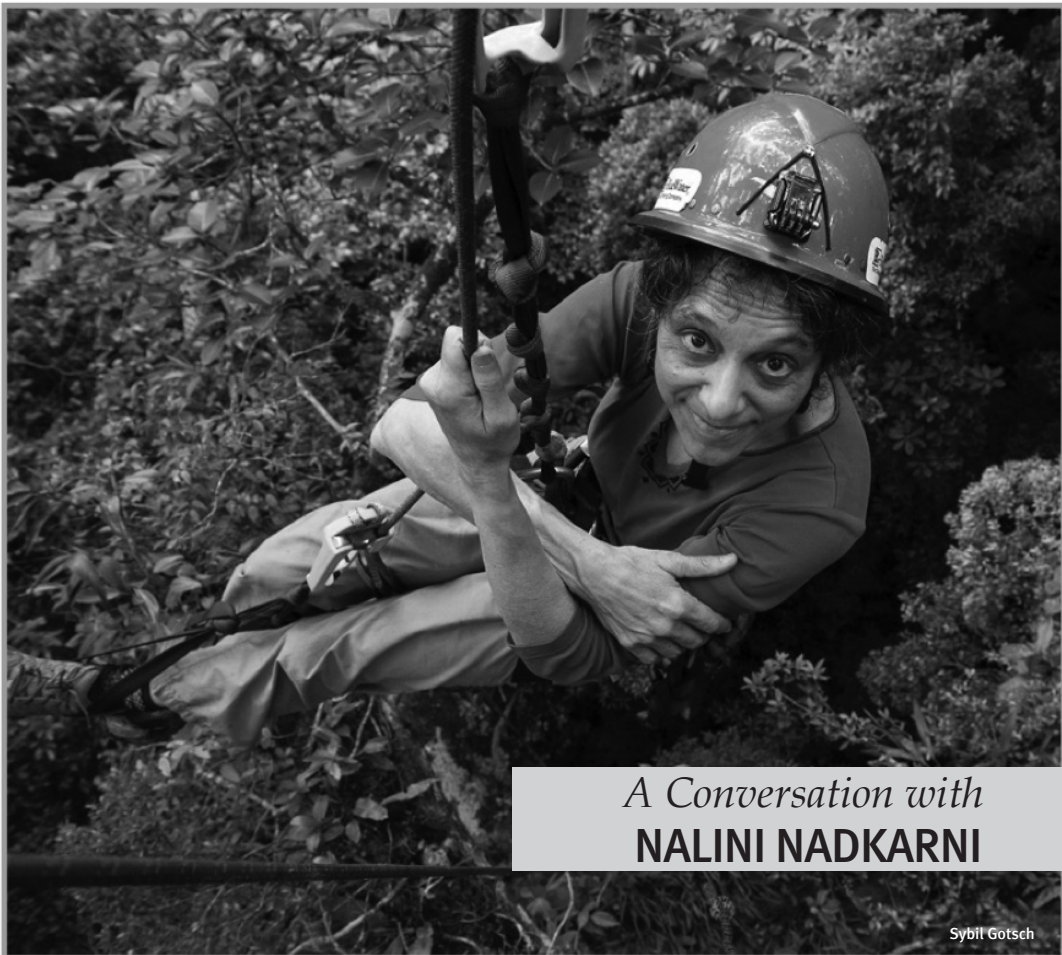


CONVERSATION

UNDER ONE CANOPY: ON INCARCERATION, INTERDISCIPLINARITY, BARBIES, AND TREES

HEATHER ROOT



A Conversation with
NALINI NADKARNI

Sybil Gotsch

Nalini Nadkarni (Ph.D., University of Washington) is a professor emerita at the University of Utah with a lifelong passion for trees. Her scientific work focuses on the ecology of forest canopies in Costa Rica and Washington State. She has published 140 scientific papers and received funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society. She was recently awarded the Enduring Achievement Award from the National Science Foundation.

Through her love of trees, Dr. Nadkarni has engaged artists, children, people of faith, and incarcerated people to provide greater access to the natural world. She conceived of treetop Barbies to connect with children, initially using secondhand dolls and volunteer seamstresses to make them, and eventually partnering with Mattel to develop a Nalini Nadkarni Barbie. She brought science into prisons by arranging for speakers, developing hands-on conservation projects with incarcerated people, and studying the effects of nature imagery in solitary confinement units. She continues to work with people of faith by linking trees with their sacred texts. Her latest project in Utah explores the ways that increased access to the natural world can improve human health.

This interview took place at Weber State University after Dr. Nadkarni spoke about tapestry thinking at the 2023 Intermountain Sustainability Summit. Her inspiring keynote address focused on weaving scientific knowledge with social values to create a culture of caring about the natural world.

Nalini, I'm so glad for the chance to speak with you today. I've read about your part-time appointment at Evergreen State College allowing you to explore avenues of public engagement. I'm wondering what kinds of things we at Weber State University could do to support early career faculty in developing the skills, the opportunities, and the time to pursue that kind of community engagement?

That is a great question, Heather. It's interesting, because the situation of splitting an academic position, which started in 1992, at Evergreen State College, really stemmed from a personal situation. My husband is also an academic. He and I got married in graduate school. We fell deeply in love with each other, and we didn't want to be apart. We were both headed towards academic appointments, but we didn't want one person on the east coast and the other on the west coast, which often happens because of the scarcity of academic

positions and how rarely they become available at the same institution. So, we decided at the very beginning of our marriage that whoever got an academic position first, as long as the other partner could still pursue his or her research, we would go ahead and take it. I ended up getting a position right out of graduate school at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I went to Santa Barbara; Jack came along as what we call "a captive spouse." I had the full-time academic position—all the status, all the tensions, stress, and joy that go along with being a full time academic in an R1 institution. Jack was using my lab space to continue his research, but he was a second-class citizen in that system. That went on for five years. Then, I got an offer to be director of research at a botanical garden on the east coast. The botanical garden was devoted to the study of canopy plants, which was great. But again, Jack didn't get a position with it. So, he followed along, again as a captive spouse. He kept doing

his research in a wonderful way, but never had academic or professional status. And then, a single position came up at Evergreen State College. Evergreen was known as a free-thinking, not-so-hard-core academic institution. By then, we had one child, our son Gus. So, we thought we could split this position. We approached Evergreen with that possibility, and they took the bait. They said, “Well, we’ll get two experts for the price of one. You will each have a faculty vote, you’ll get your own office space and lab space, and you can each teach part time.” That allowed both of us to pursue our teaching, which we both love, at an academic institution.

Teaching part-time also gave us the opportunity to do our own research. We both applied for, and were successful in getting, NSF grants. So, we were supported to do our research as well as teaching. We never got that extra half-salary so we always had to pinch our pennies. But it was worth it to us, because it was the first time both of us were equal in terms of professional status, which I think, to Jack, was very important. It also turned out to be important to me because I realized that I was constantly in a state of apologizing—to him and the world, that I had a position and he did not. It allowed us to be on equal footing professionally; it allowed us to teach in a place that valued teaching and it allowed us to carry out the research that we both loved. Teaching part-time allowed us to pursue whatever else we chose. A big piece of that was raising our children, which was really wonderful. We alternated teaching so that one of us could always be available when the kids got sick, or needed a ride, or whatever. But it also allowed me to pursue public engagement in a way that I couldn’t have done if I had had a full-time teaching position or a position at a traditional research institution.

I was able to pursue things like working with faith-based groups or taking the time I needed to build the relationships required to work with the incarcerated, because you have to actively construct that trust a tiny

bit at a time. It took two years to get into the prison system in a way that allowed me to do the work that I’ve subsequently been able to do. It allowed me to communicate, interact, and collaborate with people across the country. With my first ecological projects, my NSF-funded projects, instead of just being restricted to Evergreen State College, the way nearly all of the other faculty were, I was able to go to national and international conferences; I was able to do fieldwork for extended periods of time. So, for me, having that half-time of not teaching, of not having expectations and responsibilities, allowed me to flourish. I was able to be a better parent because I could spend more time with my kids. I think it allowed me to be a more holistic thinker and someone who could enter into other societal spheres like faith-based groups or incarcerated groups. People often say, “Gosh, how did you get to be where you are? You do all this stuff with incarcerated people, faith-based people, and artists. How do you do that?” I think the secret sauce was that I had twenty years, at the prime of my career, to do the wonderful, narrow work of a regular academic, but also to branch out into those other spheres.

So, for a young faculty member at a place like Weber State University or the University of Utah, I really hope there might be a similar mechanism as an option. I would choose to work half-time, get half my salary from the university, and extend myself in other creative ways that may have nothing to do with academics. It could still have something to do with academics, but you could have the freedom and peace of mind to not say, “I’m not doing a good job, because I’m not working eighty hours a week the way all my colleagues are around me.” But instead, say, “I’m working twenty hours a week for this, and I’m doing another ten hours of childcare, and I’m doing another ten hours of the other work that I want to do.” And if it means living in a smaller house or driving a car that’s twenty years old instead of a Tesla, that’s a

choice I want to make. Unfortunately, because of this academic structure, that's something that's still an unusual request. My hope is that, as we're learning, really, as a result of COVID, it's not always a forty-hour work week that we should be striving for. Maybe, if we take a little less money, we will have the opportunity to develop ourselves in ways that are positive, fulfilling, and productive.

That sounds wonderful. As I was reading about the work you have done during your career, I was struck by your integrity with the way you handled the situation with Mattel and how you thought about your role within the incarceration system. What

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practices do you perform to keep yourself grounded in your integrity as you do this tricky work?

It is tricky work. In academia, every now and then, you're confronted with a puzzle. Is it ethical to take money from Exxon in order to do geological research? Is it okay to bend the rules, even though you might do something that could be regarded as unethical? Maybe it comes from my own personal background—my father and mother were both very ethical people. Telling a lie in my family was the worst thing that you could possibly do. I've also had other role models, people who have kept their integrity despite offers or temptations. So, I don't know that there is a practice that I can suggest, other than constantly asking yourself, "Is this okay, or not? If I looked at this from the outside, if I looked at this from the future, and look back on myself, is this the right decision that I'm making?" Sometimes, I have to look to others and then judge my own response. For example, I was approached a number of years ago by the National Geographic Society. They had been offered twelve Toyota Land Cruisers. Toyota said to National Geographic, "Give these to your top twelve explorers." So, the guy at National Geographic called me up and said, "Nalini, I've got great news. I can give you a Toyota Land Cruiser. It's worth \$80,000. You can use it for your fieldwork, or you can sell it. You can use it however you want to use it. All you have to do is to be in a commercial for sixty seconds. You don't have to say a word. It'll be you in the Land Cruiser, going through your field site area and the ad will say 'great explorer, great car.'" Of course, the Land Cruiser is an SUV. Basically, if you were sitting back in your chair, looking at this ad, you'd think it'd be okay to have a giant car like that because National Geographic Explorer thinks it's a great car. And I was like, oh my god, I can't do that. That's a total sellout. So, I went back to the other explorers who had accepted the car, and I said, "Did you think about this?"

And some of them said, “No, I didn’t even think about it.” I thought about it, but I also really needed that car for my research. So, I went ahead and took the car. I went back to National Geographic, and I said, “You know, I would really like to have a car, but I don’t want this Land Cruiser because it’s sending the wrong message. So, what about an electric car equivalent? It’s much less money, and it gets over eight times the gas mileage. They got back to me and said, “Nope, it’s the Land Cruiser or nothing.” It was at that moment that I knew that Toyota was trying to greenwash explorers and exploit their integrity in order to sell more of these giant gas-guzzling cars. So, I had to say no. There was no way that I could take that car and think of myself as trying to sell these giant cars to the general public. So yeah, I lost out on an \$80,000 Land Cruiser that could have been very useful. But I knew that it was the right decision, and I’ve never regretted that choice.

You can take a look at the Mattel thing and say, “Barbie is a horrible role model for young girls. She’s floofy; she cares about accessories.” But Barbie has this *reach*. Everybody knows about Barbie, and our little girls love her. So, if I tweak her in a way that turns her into Treetop Barbie, or Explorer Barbie, I’ll be piggybacking on the reach that Mattel has with young girls. Maybe I’ll shift the way that young girls think about who they are; who they aspire to be; who they identify with. It was tough, walking into the world of corporate marketing, because they were clearly all about *just* selling dolls. But I think in that case, it wasn’t like they were greenwashing me. It was sort of like I was greenwashing them. And it worked. The responses that I’ve gotten, in terms of little girls who have written me letters, and people who have said, “This really makes a difference in shaping the way young girls think about themselves and about science and exploration,” I think it was the right choice. I think about every decision that has to be made when you’re invited to collab-

orate, or when you extend yourself into a collaboration. You run the danger of exploitation. The same thing happened with incarceration.

Mass incarceration is probably the worst aspect of American society that I can think of, in terms of its injustice and in the way that it’s set up. I’m not saying that there aren’t criminals and people who need to be kept away from general society; there are. But the way we go about doing it, and the injustices that have been embedded in it, are completely wrong and evil. Spending time building relationships with a prison warden or a prison officer, knowing that their mission is to enforce what the system stands for, has been really difficult at times. But again, it’s like, let me try to change this horrible system from *within*. I’ve gotten in trouble with that. People who support prison abolition have really given me a hard time. They say, “Why are you doing this? This is wrong. You’re betraying what is right.” And my response has been, “Well, I believe in prison abolition, but prison abolitionists aren’t going to make incarceration go away. At least what we’re trying to do is to shift the system as well as we can.” There are people on the inside who are saying, “Yes, these men need access to nature. Yes, they need more access to science education.” And look at the positive things that come out of that. So, if we can change those biases, prison guard by prison guard, or prison warden by prison warden, I think that’s one way of creating change in a system that seems resistant to change. There’s a role for prison abolitionists, and I think there’s a role for people like me who have tried to change the system. We all choose the way that we want to try to change intractable systems. I don’t denigrate abolitionists; I just feel like the way I’ve chosen to go about it fits within *my* code of integrity. And I’m going to keep doing it.

I appreciate the way your work is interdisciplinary and collaborative. I’m in a college of science in a botany department. I’m working with students, and I want to prepare them

to contribute to the world. Sometimes, I feel this depth-breadth trade-off. The more that I bring them into cool, collaborative, interdisciplinary projects, the less chemistry and physics they might have time to really nail down. What do you think about that trade-off in the depth and breadth of college education?

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I also experienced that in my twenty-year professional life. I was a faculty member at Evergreen State College. Evergreen was established in the early 1970s on a foundation of interdisciplinary learning and teaching. Every problem, every question that we face in our lives, whether it's changing a tire or getting a COVID vaccine, is inherently interdisciplinary. Changing a tire requires material science, physics, sociology, and economics when you really think about what is involved with a tire. Everything has an underlying value of interdisciplinarity. And so, all of the classes that were taught were always taught in this way.

It was only through my experience with interdisciplinary learning that I was able to pull that together. The University of Utah actually has a campus center called NEXUS,¹ which was established to foster interdisciplinary research, but sometimes the faculty doesn't understand how to implement such

work because they weren't trained that way. They were trained to say, "Botany is botany; botany is great; botany is what I do." Instead, they should be thinking, "How do we cultivate plants and what do plants mean to people? How can we get more people interested in botany? How can we get politicians to think about botany when they design their planning for urban parks?" Some faculty don't know how to talk to a policymaker; they may not even know how to talk to a soil person. Evergreen had the vision to produce that in an undergraduate setting, and we need more of it. I see more and more universities beginning to set up centers that foster interdisciplinary growth. I see the National Science Foundation, which funds a lot of the basic research in our country, funding what they call "convergence research." Convergence research is essentially interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. There are new programs now that are fostering engineers to come together with biologists and physiologists. So, I think now there are glimmers of academic values that are aligned within interdisciplinary research, but I think we still have a long way to go.

We talked earlier about incentive structures. How do you think incentive structures at a university could change to foster those connections and skills?

When I think of incentives, I think about research incentives that are already well in place. For instance, one of the things I've been thinking about are student and faculty research trajectories. When you're a graduate student, you usually sit down with your graduate professor, and she says, "Let's talk about your research trajectory. You're going to start with your dissertation work, and then where will that go? Who will you collaborate with, before and after your postdoc? What kind of institutions will you move into? And what resources do you need? You should be going to this conference over here to present your research results." Well, what if we had

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broader impacts on trajectories, or interdisciplinary trajectories as well? Then your major professor would sit down with you and say, “How can you connect your dissertation work with some other discipline? There’s a pilot grant that’s available from the dean, and that is specifically for collaboration with somebody outside your discipline. So why don’t you get together with somebody that you think you should collaborate with to amplify or to deepen the work that you’re trying to do? And what if you went and presented this at an arts conference instead of the ecological conference? Here’s a \$600 travel fellowship to send you to that conference. You will meet other people who are in that field who might be encouraging, interesting, and instructive in terms of your development. You’re developing your interdisciplinary persona and your

interdisciplinary portfolio. There’s an office of interdisciplinary studies to help match you up with faculty across the country. There’s an arts faculty member at Utah State University and she knows about you as a botany professor here. Do this project where your students do botanical illustration. I’ll give you \$10,000 to do that and a semester off from teaching so that you can devote yourself to that.”

So, all of these things that are already in place for a straight research trajectory—grants to generate pilot data, travel to a conference—could be applied to fostering interdisciplinary research. Unfortunately, I don’t know any universities that actually have it in place. I think there are some things that are embedded in the academic system that, at least at this time, are resistant to that. When I go to tenure meetings in my biology department, and I listen to the way people are evaluating a young professor, I hear them say, “Well, they published this, this, and this, in this botanical journal.” Or, “They’ve been published in *Science*; they published in *PNAS*; they had these other publications where they collaborated with an artist and published in an art journal, but we don’t count that.” If you’re a pre-tenure professor, gunning for tenure, then you’re going to be thinking strategically about how you’re going to make your CV and your record look the best when you present it to the tenure review committee. So, there are these deeply ingrained rewards and incentives that the academic system, for centuries, has been reinforcing. We’re just beginning to have these small voices saying, “You know, it’s okay to have a publication about botanical illustration in an artistic journal rather than in the *Annals of Botany* or *American Botanist*.” That’s just going to take time to change. I think we have to keep chipping away at it. Every time someone like me publishes in a prison journal, or a science education journal, instead of *Ecology* or *Science*, and I get tenure, get an award, or a pat on the back from the dean, the department people go, “Oh, well, maybe

when Heather comes up for tenure, we should keep that in mind?" So, I think there is going to have to be a shift in academic culture, and I hear rumblings of it, I think it's beginning. But it still has a long way to go. It may not help the person who's coming up for tenure right now, or the person who's trying to think about his or her academic trajectory now. But I think those changes are real. And I'm really, really happy to see them.

I want to switch gears. We are here in Utah. Both of us come from the Pacific Northwest. I'm trying to learn effective ways of connecting people to nature here where there aren't big trees.

The scarcity of trees actually makes them more compelling and valuable here. I think in many ways people appreciate trees and forests here in Utah even more than they do in the Pacific Northwest. In the Northwest, you're surrounded by trees. Here in Utah, you have to climb up to the mountains to get to the wonderful bits of conifer forest. For me, it's been difficult to come to love this landscape. Every morning, I wake up, and I look out at the Wasatch, and I think, "What happened to the trees?" It's like a traumatic shock each time. My husband and I both love hiking, and we go out to nature all the time. And so, I have come to have a cultivated appreciation of the landscape here and the biota here. It's not a heartfelt gut-love, like I felt the first time I went to Seattle and thought, "Oh my gosh, this is my landscape." That natural, intuitive, spiritual connection to the trees and the landscape of the Pacific Northwest was so clear to me there. Here, it's more of an intellectual connection. It's like, when are the lilies going to show up in the foothills this year? Or, look at that interesting beetle eating that interesting leaf. It's much more in my head rather than in my heart and my gut the way it was in the Pacific Northwest. And yet, native Utahans who have grown up in the Intermountain West have a posi-

tive heart-reaction to this landscape. When they are transported up to the Northwest, they're like, "Oh, my God, it's too dense here; there's too much green; I'm overwhelmed. It doesn't have that openness that makes me sing and feel good." So, I think for me, to get other people attached or connected to this landscape I have to take them through my route—which is more of an intellectual route instead of an instinctual one. Or, I have to say, "Oh, you've already got this instinctual gut connection, that's great. Maybe we can share some interactions or connections that we feel from different places which we both find interest in; which we both find connection to and both feel a sense of need to protect it." There are plenty of people, many of them are my students, who don't miss trees. They think the desert is gorgeous. The Great Salt Lake is like an aquatic desert and you can find it beautiful at certain times. Now that I've spent more time here, I can see beauty here. It's not *instinctive*, but maybe that isn't necessary. Maybe you can be connected to different landscapes in different ways. I think I'm learning that, but it's taken a lot of time.

I read that you have a background in dance.

Dance has been a huge part of my life. My parents had the wisdom to offer me and my two sisters modern dance lessons from a wonderful woman named Erica Thimey. I grew up in Bethesda, Maryland, and she had a studio in Georgetown. And so, I took modern dance lessons twice a week. I did a lot of performances when I was a kid. Then all through college, I did modern dance. I actually double-majored in biology and modern dance. But then I thought, I don't think I can do both field biology and modern dance careers. So, I had to make a choice. I ended up working at a field station in Papua New Guinea for a year after I graduated to figure out what it was like to be a field biologist. Then, I went to Paris and danced for a studio for six months to find out what it was like to be a dancer. At the end, I

sat down with my journal and decided it would be field biology. When you are a dancer, your career is basically over as a performer at thirty years old. As a scientist, I'm sixty eight and still going strong. I found the people in dance and performance were not about being open, loving, and giving, whereas biologists and scientists are. They say, "Let me tell you about what I found; here, have a specimen; what did you find out today?" It wasn't like that within dance. So, that's why I decided to go into field biology and to get my Ph.D. in forest ecology. But I always loved dancing and I still dance. I dance in an amateurish way. I'm obviously not any sort of professional, but I love to dance.

In 2006, I got a phone call from a modern dancer named Jodi Lomask. She was interested in making a dance about rainforests. I ended up bringing her down to Costa Rica—she and her full troupe.² We spent ten days down there climbing trees, then they made this amazing dance. She choreographed a dance and called it "Biome." She and her troupe performed it in San Francisco and Seattle. I started the performance with a talk about the diversity and fragility of rainforests. And then they did this amazing dance. We had tables set up in the lobby where conservation groups posted themselves, offering opportunities for conservation. We thought, if these people understand the biology and the science of rainforests and they get inspired by the beauty of them, it could create a desire to do something to protect rainforests or to protect nature in general. And so, it was a real lesson for me in establishing myself as a scientist. To see the world through the eyes of Jodi and her troupe, the bodies of these dancers, and then to understand the power of the combination of biology and dance to inspire conservation actions, was moving. I also learned that Jodi was able to perceive and understand a lot about rainforest biology through her eyes as a dancer, and she didn't want to just translate "the difference between a liana and a vine," or "how male frogs perform parental care." She acted it out; she danced it out; she had

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her own ideas. I became aware that artists are not just translators of science. They understand ecosystems, relationships, and interactions with a different vocabulary and have different ways of getting those ideas across. Their understanding and ability to communicate is just as powerful as those of scientists. For me it was a learning experience. Because of my own background, I was able to observe her life and think, if I had taken this other path, I might have been like Jodi, with her challenges, her joys, and her interactions in the dance world. As scientists, we think we have it hard, applying for NSF Grants and all. That's nothing compared to a professional dancer. But, I think she'd say, I chose the right life for myself. It was a really interesting coincidence, that I had the opportunity to revisit this alternate way of contributing to life by

watching as an observer and, to some extent, participating in a small window of her life.

I love the way art allows us to see what could be. Sometimes, I feel like science is limited because I do science about what actually is. Science is measuring what is here and now, whereas maybe dance is measuring what could be. Do you see a way that we could create a bridge?

I think the answer has to do with collaboration. When I think of Jodi's training, and what she has had to do, I couldn't do that. At the same time, I went through my training, and what it's taken to get to where I am. I had another interaction with another collaborator. This was a young filmmaker named April Lin. They were an avant-garde filmmaker, and they got a grant from the Sheffield Documentary Group in the United Kingdom. The idea was to link young filmmakers with scientists. They and I had a number of conversations about trees. They wanted to do something with trees and the future of trees. They ended up making a beautiful and meaningful animated film about a tree in the future.³ It was the composite of three different species of trees that are resilient to climate change. At first, they wanted advice about which species to use, which trees have different characteristics that would make them more resilient, both ecologically and biologically. They ended up with this film that was very avant-garde and sort of hard to understand. But the message was, genetic recombination is not going to be the answer; we're going to end up with these trees that are ugly and make no sense and are monstrosities. So, what we need to do—"we" meaning the viewers—is to stop doing the things that are driving us to climate change and forcing us into this future world where trees are only manufactured and not real trees at all. So, the message that they created through this medium was against climate change. It was a conservation message, but it was done through a medium

that I could never have come up with. I think that they were able to convey it through a language that spoke to another population that I would never be able to reach otherwise. It again reinforces that I could never do the dance that Jodi and her troupe did. I could never make the film that April made to send this message to millennials. I think the answer is to find ways to connect through other avenues—whether through the media of dance, or poetry, or avant-garde films. We don't have to become artists, we don't have to become filmmakers, but we can be generous with our knowledge, just as they're generous with their understanding and capacity to create these products. And in that way, I think we can provide visions—wanting visions or hopeful visions—of the kinds of things that are so badly needed right now.

You spoke today about tapestry thinking. What are you thinking next about tapestry threads? What is the next thread that you're most excited to work on?

I think there are two, actually. Human health is an important fundamental thread. I have every reason to believe that it's going to be integrated into this tapestry of nature because it's so needed, so obvious, so well-founded in science and in intuition. The second part is fashion. I have often scorned fashion because, first of all, I buy all my clothes secondhand. I do understand how much attention people pay to clothes. It's a billion-dollar industry, and people really care about it. At first, I thought, I'll use nature stuff as clothing. So, I started making things like moss capes, but it was shedding, it grew over the years. I couldn't wear it inside, and it wasn't really sustainable. So then I started doing the practice of taking botanically correct images of plants, printing them on fabric, and then making them into clothing items. I'd have a tag that describes the biology and the conservation of the species depicted on my jacket, or my tie, or my pants. I started work-

ing with fashion, and as it turns out, there is a place for eco-fashion. There's a lot of self-reflection in the fashion industry itself about the incredible pollutants that they generate, the non-sustainability of clothes, the consumerism involved, and the natural resources that are consumed. The idea of trying to promote conservation through the medium of clothing came to light. When I wear my little jacket with *Piper auritum* printed on it, people say, "Wow, that is a really sharp jacket." And that allows me to speak about *Piper auritum* and say, "It's endangered right now. If you want to contribute to conservation of rainforests, join The Nature Conservancy." It opens up these conversations on a one-to-one basis. And so, with a tag with that information, anyone who wears that clothing can become a walking thread of conservation and biological knowledge to other people who might not otherwise think to pick up a *National Geographic* or even think about the plant that they're walking by. It's this idea of using the value that some people place in fashion as an opportunity for raising awareness and instruction about how amazing plants are

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and what people might do to help preserve them. The fashion industry is a very hard nut to crack in terms of making it a viable, commercial thing. So, I just keep continuing to kick away at it. I send out letters, interact with people, and mention it in seminars. My work with incarceration started out the same way. I stated that the incarcerated population would benefit from learning about conservation. One day, there was a guy in the audience who said, "Are you serious about that? I volunteer at this small state prison in Rochester; I could introduce you to the warden if you want." And bingo, that's where it started, this big program for bringing conservation to the incarcerated. So, I think that if I am patient and persistent, I will find a company or an individual who will be that right connection.

So, it's about finding that one connection?

I think so. I gave a single sermon about trees and spirituality at a small church; I gave a lecture at a minimum-security prison; I put together a few Barbie dolls from consignment stores to see what would happen with that. Sometimes it takes fifteen or twenty years, but before you know it, there's Mattel calling you up and saying, "Hey, do you want to advise on Explorer Barbie?" Or the Archbishop of Canterbury wants to talk about ecological justice. And it's not like magic. I've worked really hard to get here. But it was about starting small and being satisfied with that; accepting that there are going to be barriers and obstacles; accepting that you are going to look like an idiot when you're walking down the hallway of a solitary confinement cell block, and people are saying, "What the hell is she doing here?" You've got to accept that, because one day you'll publish a paper that demonstrates that the violent infractions that happen with these men happen less often when they are able to see just an hour a day of nature videos. Seeing other prisons take off and institute the same thing in their solitary confinement cell blocks, that's big. Other peo-

ple go about making change by starting big, with giant grant proposals or other things.

I'm making change in the world through a small tapestry of care and understanding.

Thank you.

Notes

1. The University of Utah has a campus center called "NEXUS," which is a place that enhances interdisciplinary scholarship, research, and teaching. Find out more at <https://nexus.utah.edu/>.
2. See more about Jodi Lomask's dance troop at <https://www.capacitor.org/>.
3. View the film *Tr333*, which Nalini and April Lin collaborated on, at <https://vimeo.com/635224156>.



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