

State Of The Earth Transcript

Samuel Lawrence Foundation

First Fridays

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Bart Ziegler: [00:00:01] Welcome to everyone tuning in to join us for the April edition of the Samuel Lawrence Foundation's First Friday Series webinar, and Happy Earth Month to you all. My name is Bart Ziegler. I'm the President of the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. The Samuel Lawrence Foundation advances impactful programs at the intersection of science, arts, and education in order to find solutions to our planet's greatest challenges. From nuclear safety all the way to climate change. We host our First Friday shows every month to showcase the incredible people, amazing ideas, and ambitious projects advancing that that that mission and making a positive difference in the world. Yeah. For for today's first edition, today's edition of First Fridays, we have assembled a remarkable panel of experts who are working to create a more sustainable planet. I'll turn this over to our moderator, CEO of Brooklyn Story Lab, Lance Gould, to introduce our panel of speakers. Thank you. Lance?

Lance Gould: [00:01:08] Thank you, Bart and welcome to all. Many countries and companies annually share news with their constituents and stakeholders about how they are performing these state of the Union or State of the Corporation meetings project, how that entity is doing and what lies ahead. But we rarely have a state of the earth in which we collectively focus on the planet, how robust it is, how vulnerable it is, and what is happening to address those strengths and weaknesses. So today, the first Friday of Earth Month, we have assembled a panel of experts for the April episode of the Samuel Lawrence Foundation's First Fridays video podcast, who will address those thoughts from four different sectors the four P's, as we'll call them people, planet, policy and purpose. First, the report on their own activities in those sectors and their attempts to improve sustainable measures in their corners. And then we'll have a wider discussion on what we all can do to create a more resilient and equitable Earth. Joining us today. Really happy to have all of these panelists here. We have Kristy Drutman, founder of Brown Girl Green, a platform for educating thousands about environmental issues. She will be representing the people sector. We also have Patricia Sims, founder of World Elephant Day, which every August 12th garners more than a billion social

media impressions. That's a billion with a B. She will be representing planet. And we have John Holm, Senior Vice President of Pixar Global, who oversees that Nonprofits Partnership and Circular City Initiatives. John will be representing policy and Mayte Gonzalez from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN, where she is Head of Human Rights and Conservation, and her role is driving the human rights approach to the environmental sector. She will be representing purpose, and I am joining from Brooklyn, New York, where there was an earthquake today. So the planet never stops giving us surprises again. Thank you all for being here today. Each of our guests on this panel is doing outstanding work in their sector, and is contributing solutions to some of the biggest challenges we're facing as a planet. First, we'd love to hear a little more granular details about each of the initiatives with which each panelist is involved, and then we'll go broader to how things measure up in the state of the earth.

Lance Gould: [00:03:15] So first question, Patricia, you founded World Elephant Day after working on a few documentary films about elephants. Tell us about how you got started and the origins of this key date.

Patricia Sims: [00:03:26] Well, back then I was living and working out of Thailand. I was developing two different documentary projects at that time, working with the Elephant Reintroduction Foundation, which is an initiative of the Queen of Thailand. And the purpose of that organization was to return formerly captive elephants back to the wild. So there had been a half a million acres of protected forest habitat set aside in Thailand by the royal family, by the King of Thailand at that time. And we were seeing that there was a real successful, um, attempt to put elephants back in the wild and as a conservation initiative. And at that time, globally, we were facing really big challenges for elephants. And we're still facing these same challenges today. But the ivory crisis is really, really escalating at that point. And we have so many different elephants living in so many different countries around the world. And so there was really the important need to bring the world's attention together to focus on the elephant issues that are facing elephants across many different countries, many different governments. So my sense was we need one global day, one day to bring the earth together, people together, to understand what can be done to help these incredibly important creatures. So World Elephant Day was born very much in the tradition of Earth Day. At that time, there were no other world days for specific species. We had Earth Day, and so essentially I said, we need an Earth Day for elephants. And basically

we created World Elephant Day. That was on August 12th, 2012, was when we first launched it.

Lance Gould: [00:04:59] Amazing. [00:05:00] Elephants are a keystone species which are critical to helping ecosystems thrive. They and other megaherbivores even play a role in mitigating climate change. Tell us about that. And how saving elephants is not just about protecting elephant species, but really the planet itself.

Patricia Sims: [00:05:14] Well, yes. I mean, elephants are a keystone species. That's a really important concept in ecosystem preservation. I mean, we want to save elephants because they're super cool animals, but at the same time, they have a very important job to do in ecosystems, both in Africa and in Asia. And essentially there's three species of elephants the African elephant, the forest African elephant and the Asian elephant. And in each one of these habitats, these elephants are living within. They basically play an important role in primarily seed dispersal because they're a migrating species. So they roam great distances. And they also play an important role in finding water for other animals living in those ecosystems. And between seed dispersal and the sort of the caretaking, essentially of these habitats through, um, removal of, of old logs or trees, creating pathways for elephants, our other animals as well, finding water, they enable a biodiversity to occur in these habitats. And with elephants being predominant here, it allows other animals to live in these habitats as well. So that's why it's very important when we look at how elephants are, are basically significant for ecosystem health. Um, they, they help mitigate climate change by being caretakers essentially of the forest, by planting trees. So we need to have elephants around so that they can continue to do this, because without elephants, these habitats would crumble.

Lance Gould: [00:06:44] Thank you so much, Patricia, for that. And as I understand it, they also eat a lot of the the smaller vegetation which allows the larger trees which are larger carbon stores, to thrive. And that's also a huge important factor in mitigating climate change. So elephants so much more important than just being really cool animals, as Patricia just noted. Um, Christy, thank you for joining us today. Tell us about Brown Girl Green and how you and your organization are creating equitable opportunities in teaching so many about the environment. Please also tell us about the privileged problem that's discussed on your website.

Kristy Drutman: [00:07:20] Hi everyone. My name is Kristy Drutman and I'm the Founder of Brown Girl Green, environmental media series focused on educating people about the climate crisis and bringing climate solutions to audiences worldwide. Um, I'm also the co-founder of Green Jobs Board, which is an end to end career platform focused on giving job seekers all the tools and skills necessary to work on the climate crisis. I'm all about accessibility, sustainability and inclusivity, especially through storytelling and media tools. So I'm always about how can we connect the dots for people and make it easier for them to get involved. And for communities that have previously not been included in the climate conversation to have a seat at the table as well.

Lance Gould: [00:07:59] And, Kristy, you're also one of the founders of the Green Jobs Board, a website that is specifically geared to pairing employees and employers in green spaces. How did this come about and what kind of impact is the Green Jobs Board having?

Kristy Drutman: [00:08:11] Yeah, so Green Jobs Board started off as an initiative because I felt like it was really difficult for me to find, you know, an opportunity when I finished university to get into the climate space. And I really wanted to make it a lot easier for people to find these opportunities and to get involved. And so I started curating it on social media, and then from there, like it turned into, like this viral moment where young people were finding jobs and fellowships and opportunities and resources to get involved in the field and the industry. And all of a sudden, people were just picking up on the momentum and realized like, this was a resource and a space that really needed to happen. And companies and organizations were realizing they could utilize us as like legitimate recruitment platform and actually reach, you know, a diverse set of talent and audiences that were created on the platform, which was super amazing. And technically, now we have over 130,000 people around the world currently using our platform. We have around 330,000 impressions per month, and 80% are women identifying. And so we're really trying to change the game when it comes to bringing more diverse talent into the climate space.

Lance Gould: [00:09:20] That's great. I urge people who are watching to go to Brown Girl Green and to look at the Green Jobs board, because it's really incredible in terms of if you're looking for job opportunities in the green space, there really are an amazing

number of opportunities there that Kristy has done such a great job curating. Kristy, we're having a little trouble hearing you. So when we come back to you next time, just see if you can turn your volume up. In the meantime, we're going to go to John and John. Your work with Sarah truly spans the globe, as your nonprofit has had projects in 150 countries since it began. You have so many critical initiatives in the works. For starters, tell us about the Circular Supply Chain Coalition and urban mining and how this. To be a game changing [00:10:00] program.

John Holm: [00:10:01] Yeah, a really good question. And first of all, thank you for the time. And I'm really enjoying being around such wonderfully strong and powerful women. So thank you for allowing me to be up here. A couple of things. I think, first of all, I just want to take a step back. I mean, Pixar Global, we're a systems change organization whose mission really is to connect public, private, social sectors together to solve what we call solvable problems at the behest of frontline communities. With the idea that frontline communities already hold the answers to the solutions we need. We don't need more tech. We need to fundamentally change the way that we live on this planet. And that really, really focuses on more going back to reduce, reuse, repurpose behaviors. And so the Circular Supply Chain coalition, a lot of the work that we're fortunate enough to do is really focused around stakeholder convening and bringing together the best and the brightest to solve, to really build scalable coalitions. And what's really fascinating is, is, is kind of looking at the current situation around critical minerals. I think, as everyone knows, the transition to renewable energy is a tough one. It requires critical mineral transitions. And right now, at the moment, China controls 95% of all critical minerals, whether that is extraction or refining. And so what's happening right now is that there's enough, for example, lithium batteries in US landfills to charge us for the next 70 years. Yet the United States really does not have a, let's say, a reuse, reuse mindset. It's really extractive. In fact, to demonstrate some of that on a policy front, 19 US states alone cannot even legislate on banning plastic because it can't just make it right.

John Holm: [00:11:33] So I think when you're looking at the policy framework in the United States, it's extractive. It's really benefiting. The subsidies are really benefiting the oil and gas and petrochemical industries on plastic production. That's just a framework we live. I think one thing that's really been important is when you look at the \$1.1 trillion the US gave to oil and gas companies alone on subsidies in 2022, we have to really

rethink what bottom up policy looks like and really around reuse, repurpose behavior. And that leads us to the Circular Supply Chain Coalition, which is a coalition of really great, really thinking through reuse hubs, where essentially you take a supply chain, you look at getting some of those US subsidies from USG to invest in urban mining, and you work with the technology sector where critical minerals has value and really get their support. So, for example, companies like Amazon, Apple, Cisco who really invest and really need to return those critical minerals to the pipe to reuse them again, it's actually more of a business value than actually extracting new ones, really looking at how we can set the table, to really one build a reuse methodology, but to center it in the most polluted areas of town, which are typically black and brown communities and really focus the interventions on the reuse of standing up organizations there to be the main stakeholder and beneficiary of the transition.

Lance Gould: [00:12:59] It's such a fascinating way to rethink something that seems so obvious when you think about it, but it's just not there. And I love I love what Pixar is doing there. Pixar is also a member of the Circular City Coalition, a multi-stakeholder initiative that you helped lead, John, representing more than 100 global cities. There's another fascinating and developing story here about changing the way cities behave. And with 68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, this will be a critical path forward for the planet. So tell us about the Circular City Coalition.

John Holm: [00:13:31] Well, it's similar, I think. I think the way the Circular City Coalition works is something that resonates with what was just being said in the previous conversation. It's really about taking a look at the following cities right now don't have the mandate, the power, the funding to really provide the the policy frameworks necessary for the citizens to take care of them. They just don't have it. And so what the city looks to up aim is, is the following. It's really to try to connect equity. So really looking at bottom up ventures around climate mitigation that already are existing and working around housing, food, energy, and then really looking at a city and taking their economic development, their equity policy and their sustainability policy and putting them together to really build incentives from a city, state and federal level to incentivize the policy framework to lead a, I would say, a regenerative and equitable paradigm shift. And when I use that word, I don't say that lightly. It's really, really trying to reframe and rethink how cities can shape and form and lead the transitions that we have to have on this planet, because time's too short already.

John Holm: [00:14:42] And so we really got to rethink these things. And so I think one of the key things with the Circular City Coalition is with our partners. For example, metabolic Climate-kic First Mile NL energy, the largest renewable energy company in the world. It's really thinking through bottom up, top down. Incentives, I [00:15:00] would say subsidies at a local, I would say city and state scale. And we've built quite a movement like we have over 30, as you mentioned, between net zero cities in the EU and the circular city coalition in the United States. We're talking over 140 cities, but not just the tier one cities that always gets thrown, all the gets thrown, all the accolades. I'm talking about the harder cities that don't get the support. The Lake Charles is the world. The El Paso, Texas's the ones that actually do not have any support in trying to lead this transition. And we're frontline communities are being really overlooked, overburdened every single day. And so really, our mission is really focusing on on really leading this cause.

Lance Gould: [00:15:39] Such important work. And you mentioned some of the partners that you're working with. It sounds like Brown Girl Green could be another one of those partners for sure.

John Holm: [00:15:45] 100%. I'm going to get on a call with her in the next week, that's for sure.

Lance Gould: [00:15:49] The IUCN is such an important organization with so many different components. It is also the world's largest and most diverse environmental network. For those who are not familiar with the IUCN. Can you tell us a bit about the overall organization?

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:16:03] Thank you Lance. And yes, it's my pleasure to talk about such a beautiful organization. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, as you mentioned, is is the biggest network across the world, a uniquely composed of both government and civil society organizations. Up to now, the union, there are more than 400 1400 members organizations and around 15,000 experts all across the world, every every single member and expert working together, putting science, putting effort. Putting love. Disregarding the natural world. I like to think about the power of the union. And

that is what IUCN is trying to bring to the table. The power of the Union to safeguarding our natural world.

Lance Gould: [00:16:58] That's amazing. And IUCN is, as we mentioned, also oversees the Red list, which monitors every species on the planet. So it's such an incredible and important organization. Your work, specifically Meitei, covers the human rights element to environmental work, and you were leading two separate initiatives. One is called Rise and what is called Padang Rise is an acronym for Resilient and Inclusive Sustainable Environments and a focus on addressing gender based violence issues in environmental work. Can you please tell us more about that? And also Padang.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:17:31] Yes, sure. But but maybe let me just comment something. Lance. And sorry for being disobedient, but you mentioned first the red list of species that yes, that is an important tool of IUCN, but I want to emphasize that as we have tools to work with the natural world and with the species, we do have tools to work with and for the people. And that's the importance of our human rights based approach. And that's why I am devoting my days and nights to the human rights in conservation angle and entering, using that as an entry point. I really appreciate that you commented on the On the Rise initiative, which is the resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments grants. It's basically a challenge lens. And what I would like to emphasize is that even this is coming from a traditional conservation organization. As IUCN, this mechanism is focusing in addressing gender based violence in the environment. So so this is this is transformational because what we are acknowledging is that even in the environmental work and in the environmental community, there is a component of violence, particularly gender based violence, that we have to address. And we do that because we believe that women rights, youth rights, community rights are human rights. So starting from that point of view, this initiative funded by the USAID, a it's it's. It's trying to make visible how the violence is present, even in a very noble area, as the conservation community might say.

Lance Gould: [00:19:22] Can you briefly explain to the audience how gender based violence comes up in this work? You're talking about women who are in the environmental field and who are exposed to violence in that in that particular manner. Right?

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:19:37] Yes. That's correct. But not only women. But let's think on women and girls as one of the very important audiences for this. And when we talk Lance and colleagues about gender based violence in the environment, what we found is through a very extensive research process, was that even we have a projects and initiatives [00:20:00] that were trying to address gender issues and empower women and girls. In many occasions, we will retroactively see that women and girls will not participate, will not fully participate. And then we ask the question, what is happening? And then we open a completely new dimension of understanding the risk that women and girls face in trying to do their conservation work in trying to engage in conservation work. Then we started to find a very strong and terrible data. For example, in Africa, women spend more than 14,000,000,000 hours a year just trying to get some water. And in that process they are exposed to all types of, of violations of their rights. So so there is a violence dimension that we need to address in conservation to make conservation effective. That is about a lens that's amazing.

Lance Gould: [00:21:03] And it's such important work that you're doing because we're really hurting ourselves. We we have women and people who are committed to doing this work, but we don't have a safe work environment for them to do that. And so we're hurting ourselves as a planet by not allowing them to do the work that they, they, they could and want to do. Thanks to all of you for sharing more about your work. Now, let's talk more broadly about the sectors that we're discussing today. So, Christy, let's start with you. Why is diversity so important when it comes to matters of environment? Help people outside of this kind of work understand the connection between climate justice and racial justice. And let's make sure your mic is turned up as best as we can here.

Kristy Drutman: [00:21:44] Okay? Can you all hear me?

Lance Gould: [00:21:46] Perfect. Good. Much better.

Kristy Drutman: [00:21:48] Okay, great. I mean, I think, you know, when it comes to talking about, you know, equity in this space, we have to realize that there's a lot of people that are not included in this conversation, despite the fact that black, indigenous, and people of color live on the front lines of the climate crisis worldwide and people that are, you know, having to, you know, focus on making ends meet to just get day to day

by to, like, support their families. And in order for us to be able to build solutions that actually are going to be effective long term, we have to put it in the context of what people are experiencing in their day to day lives, how to make sure that there's economic justice and racial justice embedded in that, because the system, as it's designed today, is still built on systems of oppression that continue to make the people that have more, have more, and the people have less, have less. And when it comes to climate solutions, we have to make sure that no solutions are providing, you know, co-benefits, whether that be providing more jobs, whether that be providing better places to live, play, breathe and eat.

Kristy Drutman: [00:23:01] And, and so we have to make sure that those solutions aren't going to actually push communities further into more vulnerability, but actually build their resilience, build their ability to adapt and mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. And, you know, there's so much data coming out that shows that, you know, once we invest in the most marginalized communities when it comes to climate change, we are going to see that bottom up effect of that ripple effect that like the climate solution that will benefit everyone because then you're benefiting your labor force, you're benefiting communities on the ground that, you know, are building our agricultural systems, for example, and so on and so forth. And so the way we have to view it is that if we want to build climate justice, we have to understand that it is an intersectional issue and that we need to have leaders and communities that understand these issues very intimately in their own circles, and being at that conversation.

Lance Gould: [00:24:01] Very powerful. And societies are only as strong as their weakest link. And if we if we if I'm reading right, what you're saying, like when we have communities that are so vulnerable and so not part of the conversation, not part of the equation, it makes all of society suffer. And by by lifting them, we make all of society better.

Kristy Drutman: [00:24:25] Exactly. I think in general, you know, if we want to see a climate justice world and see a transition that is actually going to be meaningful, we have to think about the system as a whole and why people have not entered these spaces, whether that be educational barriers, lack of access to good public transportation, the inability, to see opportunities outside of their community, right, or opportunities inside of their communities. And so those of us that are building climate

solutions, we have to understand the barriers to entry that prevent people from [00:25:00] being in this conversation and make sure that we're always, you know, putting ourselves in other people's shoes, to keep iterating and making that, you know, better and more positive and inclusive and mighty.

Lance Gould: [00:25:12] Do you have a response to this question as well? Just talking about why diversity is so important to matters of environment, making the connection between climate justice and racial justice?

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:25:24] Yes, sure. Lance, and thank you for the for the for the comment and the opportunity to comment on this interdependence between people and nature. And that is basically the reason of our work, the purpose of our work, United for Life and Livelihoods, a enabling society, economies and nature to thrive together by safeguarding. Natural world. It will only make sense in real terms if we do acknowledge that biodiversity includes every human, every single human on earth. And in that regard, Lanza and colleagues, we we do recognize that there are some groups that have been traditionally marginalized. And then we start talking about women, girls, Jews, but also about indigenous peoples and local communities. So that is the reason why one, one of the of the aims of of IUCN is to make sure that we make visible enough and that we address all the historical a harm that has been done to to these groups, not only from other sectors, but also from our own conservation sector, trying to bring solutions for nature and not for people.

Lance Gould: [00:26:39] How new is that program? Might because it sounds like because the IUCN is so well known for its work in the environment, but this component is so fascinating. How new is this initiative to bring people into it?

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:26:53] This is interesting. This is the basis of our nature 2030 program. Lance and colleagues. And and actually, this is a new way of, of of thinking, of rethinking conservation. And I would say that this is something that has been happening for, for I would say for decades now, but maybe with, with more with strongly, strongly address it through the SDGs. For example, now we have a new global biodiversity framework, which also emphasizes the need to work in the people nature dimension. So I would say that in the in in IUCN. This is a new transformational approach. We are not only centering species, but we are putting people in the center.

Lance Gould: [00:27:43] That's so great. I love that IUCN is now embracing that that decades old approach. It's it's so important and it's so refreshing. John, Kristy was just talking a few minutes ago about systems change. And one thing from a policy perspective that I find so interesting about Sierra is its embrace of overall systems change. What kind of what kind of public sector initiatives and policies are you seeing in your global work, John, that one give you encouragement that things are going in the right direction and two, that alarm you that they're not?

John Holm: [00:28:13] Boy, is that a great question. I first want to preface this that myself. I'm not in the policy space. Right. So while we get to work, we get to work with a lot of wonderful policy experts. And I think, you know, there's a couple of things that I want to focus on. I think one is happening in our backyard in the United States. My colleague and friend, Rachel Kibet, she moved across a, I would say a bipartisan bill called the Americas Trade and Investment Act. It was introduced by US senators Bill Cassidy from Louisiana and Michael Bennet in Colorado, really focusing on a \$14 billion incentives for circularity across apparel, footwear, accessories and home linens and the remanufacturing space in the United States. Now, that, to me is something that's new. We've not seen anything like that. I think also in the landscape where you see now traditionally red Republican actors, they do look at China as an issue of national security. So that's been a really positive development. Another positive development is around deep sea mining. There was a big move recently, a lot of a private sector companies wanting to jump in and start looking at opening up the seas themselves, which would have a lot of negative consequences. And companies right now are trying to move back. The problem is, is that the US government right now is looking to go in and the right now trying to consider it. So it's on the edge. Private sector kind of moving away, public sector coming in and looking at a play as a strategic differentiation. I would say jumping across broadly, especially relevant to this conversation is the emergence of ecocide, where you're seeing companies like shell being sued for their harm of the earth, for their harm of nature.

John Holm: [00:29:53] That is also something that is really positive for the world, where there's accountability being put on [00:30:00] companies whose business is extracting, taking from the land and harming the environment to actually look at in a different way. The other piece that resonates in the United States around that, and this was about a

year and a half ago, some kids in Montana, rallied in Montana, Montana Supreme Court, actually, putting in a judgment which was backed, where essentially they fought for saying that in their Constitution. We have we have the right to be guaranteed a safe, waters, mountains, land, etc.. and they sued and they won. They actually were able to push that through. Now it's in process. But I mean, these are some things where I think one thing that we're seeing, Lance, across the world, you're seeing a revolt against, or a revolt in protecting nature really against those actors that are harming. You're seeing legal frameworks come in. You're seeing lawyers like Rob Bellotti, who have been on the front lines of PFAS, and really making deep dives into holding companies responsible, really critical to actually helping and preserving the environment. That does not mean at all companies are bad. Quite the contrary. We work with a lot of wonderful companies. What we're trying to say, though, is that the planet itself, right now, the time is ticking, literally. And I think to see, I would say to see some of the policies coming in there supporting, reuse, repurposed, to seeing that there's consequences and extracting and harming the environment are real. That's something that's emerging and something I think that everyone can get behind.

Lance Gould: [00:31:29] I love those examples that you gave John and, last month on, on this very program, for Women's History Month, we had a panel and Melissa Sims was one of our guests. And she is using Rico statutes, which are usually used to go after organized crime to sue ExxonMobil, shell, Chevron, BP, all the global fossil fuel companies for harming the planet. So that's that's been a really interesting, development in in terms of using, unique and creative legal strategies to go after these polluters.

John Holm: [00:32:06] So I do want to bring up one thing here, though, and I think, I think it's important. I want everyone to pay attention. Sure. John Haas from Greenpeace is a close friend of mine. Greenpeace is right now being sued in the United States, in North Dakota right now for their advocacy of supporting frontline communities in North Dakota with a \$300 million lawsuit that could potentially put Greenpeace underwater. I say that because that is something that's on the wrong side right now. The fact that an organization that was rallying around protecting indigenous lands and cultures is being sued by a petrochemical state and oil and gas state, that's very hard to take. And so I think anybody that just searches Greenpeace lawsuit, North Dakota, take a look at that.

Greenpeace is coming out in marketing that I think they're an important voice in the space representing community needs. So just want to put some light out there for them.

Lance Gould: [00:32:54] Thank you John. No, that's critically important. And everyone please do check that out. And on the Samuel Lawrence website, if we find any petitions that will support Greenpeace, we will make sure that those are available to the audience next week when this goes live. When this when this video is recorded and available to, to be watched again. Amazing. Patricia, you've done extensive field work with elephants all over Asia and Africa, as well as with other species such as large marine mammals at sea. What conservation trends are you seeing from the planet perspective that give you pause and that give you hope?

Patricia Sims: [00:33:29] Well. Wow. I mean, I'm just listening to what others are saying, you know? I mean, I think we have to maintain hope. It's easy sometimes to not have hope. And, I mean, we're talking about fighting back. The elephants have been fighting back. The elephants have been fighting back for a while, actually. And I mean, we've seen, you know, in the last 15 years with the ivory crisis and, you know, we lost hundreds of thousands of elephants in Africa and to a lesser extent, in Asia. We've made some progress with the ivory poaching issue, but illegal trade still goes on. There's been enforcement policies put in place in several countries around the world, but still, it's great that the laws are there, but they do need to be enforced and poaching still goes on in different countries. The reasons behind poaching are complex. When we're looking at those on the ground that are actually doing the act versus how that's even being run as a business through international crime syndicates, which go much bigger than actual illegal wildlife trade. There's all kinds of other aspects that are part of those international crime syndicates, those on the ground that are still doing the poaching are often working from positions of poverty. So they're being taken advantage of. In a lot of these cases, that problem requires continual management and enforcement. But fundamentally, [00:35:00] the biggest problem that elephants are facing, and it's not just elephants, it's all of the megafauna on the planet is loss of habitat.

Patricia Sims: [00:35:07] Loss of habitat is number one biggest problem. And that is only due to one significant reason humans. We are kind of like the most identified invasive species on the planet right now. When you look at a human, you put humans

into any ecosystem. There's going to become a problem at some point. So our responsibility and, my team mentioned this is how humans are going to be working independently and interdependently with nature and with wildlife. How are we going to find these opportunities to work and live in harmony with these creatures? So what's happening with elephants is a very, very prime example of this. And the biggest problem that we're facing for elephants in, in Asia and in Africa now is human elephant conflict problems. And the reason that these conflict problems are existing is not because of the elephants, but because of the people. And we hear different comments, people saying, oh, there's too many elephants in South Africa. We've got too many elephants in Botswana. Well, it's not the elephants fault. It's not that there's too many elephants. There might be too many people, or there might be a problem where these elephants and their habitat is being completely taken away from them, because essentially humans and elephants are kind of competing for the same habitats. So how are we going to keep this, keep this harmonious? How are we going to find these peaceful solutions between elephants and people? And there are several examples of this going on in the world.

Patricia Sims: [00:36:42] We talked earlier about the mitigation of conflict with utilizing bees, bee fencing, as it's called. And interestingly, bees are also a keystone species. And so you've got this kind of macro micro keystone species relationship that's taking place because for reasons we don't really understand, elephants kind of don't like bees. And they'll stay away from bees. And so it's been utilized and in, in throughout actually India it's been done in China, in the southwest part of China where there's still a wild population of Asian elephants. And it's being done throughout Africa now. And this is starting to show some success, meaning that elephants are going to be staying away from these areas, from these, these cropland areas that are being protected by by bee fencing, so that humans whose livelihoods depend on these croplands are not going to be affected. And elephants can carry on doing what they do, which is forage. You know, they're herbivores, they're not a predatory species. They're not a naturally aggressive species. They don't want to go out and attack people at all. Elephants are actually quite empathetic and can be quite social with humans. In fact, I'm talking wild elephants. There's lots of examples of wild elephants exhibiting harmonious behaviors with humans in these proximities when when they're left to themselves, when they're not bothered by human intervention. And so these types of balances that we need to learn

about how we're going to be living and working with wildlife going forward, because these conflict issues are not just related to elephants.

Patricia Sims: [00:38:22] We're seeing it with predatory species. We're seeing it in Canada, for example. We've got huge predatory issues with grizzly. There's where we've got conflict problems, where you've got predators coming into human habitat and areas that becomes an issue for humans. We can't be at war with these, with these animals. We have to live in concert with them. Because basically, the Earth herself, she is a living organism. She is an instrumented, interconnected living system that we all must learn to live together on and within. So elephants represent a very, very strong symbol in how we're going to be doing this. Because people love elephants, they may in fact be one of the most loved species on the planet. We feel this this connection to elephants. Why? I've always believed that elephants exhibit all the qualities that humans strive to have or should strive to have. Maybe in some times, in some ways, they're they're better people than we are in terms of how they treat each other and what they show each other in terms of empathy and caretaking. Essentially, you know, back to the earlier comments we were talking about with elephants and what's the role of elephants and habitat as a keystone species? Well, they take they take care of stuff, they take care of habitat, they take care of each other. And we can learn a lot from elephants in that regard.

Patricia Sims: [00:39:45] And so I do maintain that hope, and I do see lots of examples. There's countless organizations now that are starting to get up and look for ways to mitigate the conflict issues we need [00:40:00] to look at from a government level, though large areas of habitat where interconnected corridors can be created. So these these wildlife areas, these sanctuaries, like even what I was talking about in the work that we were doing in Thailand, it's a half a million acres of protected habitat, but it's not contiguous. There aren't corridors. So elephants are still more or less having to maintain themselves within relatively small areas. And as a roaming species, that can be very difficult. We saw what happened two years ago with the wandering elephants from southwest China, Yunnan province. I mean, they captured global attention. The, you know, these elephants that wandered out of their protected area. Why did they do that? You know what? Perhaps they were looking for more habitat and then ended up going back, you know, because they discovered that there there wasn't any and they probably had it pretty good in the Shishan Bonnet Protected area, which is, you know, a

few hundred thousand hectares of protected area, one of the only remaining protected areas left in China. So elephants will work with us if we work with them. And so I believe that they really represent a lot of hope for us as a species because of what they represent.

Lance Gould: [00:41:08] I love hearing you talk about elephants. You have so much global knowledge, and it's just really so, so delightful to hear you talk about all the and the differences between the Asian elephants and the African elephants and the different conflicts that they each face. World Elephant Day is one of the biggest social awareness days on the calendar. Patricia, what is happening this year on August 12th for World Elephant Day? And after you answer this question, we're going to take some questions from the audience.

Patricia Sims: [00:41:37] Well, this this year is going to be very special for me, but I'm actually going to be in Kenya for World Elephant Day this year. This will actually be my first trip to Kenya. In fact, many people would assume that I've been there because of World Elephant Day and our affiliations with so many different organizations that are working on the ground in Kenya. But this is actually my first time of having my feet on the ground in Kenya. So we'll be there working, through travel, actually, we're doing a kind of an elephant eco safari through Exodus Travel and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, of which I'm a fellow of the Royal Geographic Society and also a travel ambassador. And so we're bringing all of our efforts together to have this this week in Kenya will be in the, in the Masai Mara. We'll be going to some of the organizations around the as in the Mara Elephant Project as we see here, that are doing really, really important work to the preservation of this habitat. What's happening there, huge conflict issues going on there, as well as the ongoing poaching problem. So a lot of these organizations are trying to to maintain these populations and work with the local populations, the local human populations in these areas, to find these different ways that that humans and, and elephants can work together. So that's what's happening for World Elephant Day, this year, which will be really special for me.

Lance Gould: [00:42:58] Really excited. That'll be August 12th. So just mark that on your calendars coming up, later this summer. Let me now introduce Grace Chalmers, who is the program director for the Samuel Lawrence Foundation. And she's going to come in and give us some questions from the audience.

Grace Chalmers: [00:43:14] Thanks, Lance. A reminder to everyone watching on Zoom: Please feel free to submit some questions in the chat box and we'll answer as many as we can. But first, we have a gentleman from Canada who wrote in with a question. He lives in northern Ontario, where the boreal forest is being cleared very, very rapidly. And he noted that the most recent deforestation issues were due to the subsidized biomass industry, where trees are being cut to feed boilers and produce electricity. So his question was, what is the state of the world's forests? And can any of you speak to how forests contribute to the health of the planet?

Lance Gould: [00:43:47] Who wants to take that one on? My take is that, fall into your area or Patricia also being from Canada, does that work for you, John as well?

John Holm: [00:43:59] I'll jump in with my two cents on that one. I've had the wonderful privilege to work with Amazon's Sacred Headwaters, representing, I would say, the largest tipping point in the world in the Amazon forest. And what is clear is that extraction is doubling down as the populations keep on building, as we keep on developing new land and new property, not thinking through, how we're living in spaces and using existing spaces, this problem is just exacerbating itself. I think forests, and I think there's other people on this call that'll make it a little bit more specific than I do are keystone to the world's life. And we're removing them left and right, up and down, tide aside, across the world, there's this notion that actually just going ahead and planting a bunch of trees is going to save the world. What's actually really important with forest is the ecosystem. It protects what it what it brings, the rains that it brings to the world. So I think, to answer your question, in Canada, I would say that we're just seeing this across across the pond. I think the best [00:45:00] thing for folks to do on the ground is to make the case, try to vote on a local level, on a, on a province level, on a federal level of really trying to find, I would say, people that can really lift the voice of what needs to happen and take action individually and build collective action and bottom up. I don't see any other way other than that.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:45:22] Let me, let me comment also on that. Lance, if you allow me a and this, this point of the forest, bring me to think about the inefficient funding scheme that we that we have for conservation. Still, protecting and restoring forests and other ecosystems will deliver about one third of the climate mitigation that is needed to

avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change. But do we know that funding for forest protection still remains less than 1% of overall climate finance? So we need to transform the system so we can address these issues. Thank you.

Lance Gould: [00:46:03] Both good points: Systems change. John's point about voting. Both very important. Grace, do we have another question?

Grace Chalmers: [00:46:11] We do. And I'm actually starting to think our audience is catching on to these comments about subsidies, because we have another one about the subsidization in the fossil fuel industry that's running rampant. I think they heard you say, John, earlier, that there were \$1.1 trillion in US subsidies. So can you all speak to the challenge of undertaking this really fundamental climate and environmental justice work when there are so many governments and organizations subsidizing fossil fuels? How do you tackle that and how do you approach that in your work?

Lance Gould: [00:46:42] Let's start with Kristy, just to see what her thoughts are on that.

Kristy Drutman: [00:46:47] Yeah. I would say that it's really important to raise awareness on false solutions. And so, you know, a lot of my peers who are also in the space as environmental storytellers, we're raising a lot of awareness on, you know, why we don't have time to continue promoting false solutions like things like, you know, natural gas and, and, and different types of extraction, especially on federal or indigenous lands. And saying that there's like these necessary evils we need in order to get to, you know, a more renewable, like, environmentally just future. I just don't buy it. I think we have the solutions right now to be able to build the planet, that we want to see, to restore ecosystems, to put indigenous leadership at the forefront of climate solutions and people with power and money and greed are continuing to profit off of these disasters, off our lives. And so I think there's a huge responsibility for those of us who have platforms and are in these spaces to be very clear that we do not need to live in the era of fossil fuels anymore, and that we need to be in an era that's actually working towards regenerative solutions that are protective of people and the planet, and that those solutions need to be funded, they need to be scaled. And the sooner we're able to make that very loud and clear for people, hopefully that message gets repeated enough to where people in power are pressured to really step up and to make that happen.

Lance Gould: [00:48:21] That's a great point. And, John, you were saying earlier that if we can redirect those subsidies from fossil fuels and extractive processes to non-extractive processes that are, that are reusing and reducing and recycling, using urban mining, for example. What if we gave urban mining scenarios, those same subsidies? That could be a real systems change.

John Holm: [00:48:47] It could be. I want to, first of all, double down on what Kristy said. She's absolutely 100% right. There's a bait and switch happening right now. If you look at actually anytime the word climate technology comes in, I get shivers down my spine because you hear carbon capture solutions, direct air capture. You're here. Algae, blooming. You hear hydrogen. You hear methane. All these things here are bought by the environment of the oil and gas sector. That's why the Paris agreements or the oil and gas companies walk back. There's no accountability. That's just the fact we live in. So what we have to look at doing is really thinking through differently, reduce, reuse behaviors, not from a savior point of view, but really trying to restore the Earth. And so when you're looking at subsidies, one thing that's really important to note is that private sector has a lot of power. The question here is, how do you take a company like Enel, the largest renewable energy company in the world? How do you take the, I would say, net positive businesses and get them to come over and help us support the policy frameworks? And so that's what the Circular Supply Chain Coalition is doing in the sense is saying, okay, we have this problem of critical minerals. We can't extract, China [00:50:00] holds a lot, but we need them. How do we get those and develop a new type of mechanism that prioritizes, I would say, the traits and behaviors of 80% of the world, which are people living day to day on repurposing, reusing materials and really try to build the framework for that. We cannot do that alone anymore. It's not it's not one person, one vote. It's \$1, one vote. And if you're claiming \$1, one vote, you have to have the private sector at least involved to support and develop that policy, because that's just dumping down and saying it's not fair, not going to change anything. So those are the dynamics of more bottom up support. And then thinking through a little bit differently of how to unite bipartisan interests to help move the needle.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:50:42] Can I, can I say something on that?

Lance Gould: [00:50:45] Please, go ahead.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:50:46] Sorry, sorry I'm getting so excited.

Lance Gould: [00:50:48] That's great.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:50:49] Thanks. Another way to redirect these subsidies. As John mentioned, I think we can think about redirecting to support nature based climate solutions. If if we think that currently around, I don't know, \$130 billion per year, are dedicated to nature based solutions. But the truth is that that needs to be like tripled by 2030 if we want to achieve the goals. So the funding gap for biodiversity conservation is still even bigger. So one option, and it will be really interesting to, invite the private sector to support nature based solutions could be an option of this redirection of the subsidies. Thank you.

Lance Gould: [00:51:36] That's a great point. And that actually leads me to to to my next question, which is for all the panelists, I want to address the interconnectedness of so much of the work that you're all doing, the work that Patricia, conducts on behalf of elephants has a positive impact, not just on elephant species, but on ecosystems and habitats, as well as on indigenous communities adjacent to those habitats. And the work that John and Mayte and Kristy does also relies on and has positive benefits across many sectors. So I'd like for all of you to address the idea of interconnectedness and how planet people, purpose and policy interconnect with each other. And to my taste point, how do we bring the private sector and the and the planet together? So, I'd love to hear from all of you in any order, Patricia, maybe we'll start with you.

Patricia Sims: [00:52:25] Absolutely. We need to engage the private sector, you know, particularly the resource extraction sector. You know, these companies have a lot of money and they can act really quickly on things. And, you know, unfortunately, the governmental policy process takes time by its very nature because it's, you know, it's by consensus. There is a voting process. There's elections and sadly, in a lot of cases there's corruption. So we don't necessarily always get where we're trying to go, and we're trying to talk at the government level. If the resource sector corporations can be engaged where they can get some value added, you know, through basically setting aside certain areas of habitat, just not going there, leaving it alone, as I was talking earlier about creating corridors, you know, there's the idea we're going to be extracting

resources. Our civilization is rooted in that. How do we do that? But at the same time, give back. I think reciprocity is one of the key points that we need to be doing right now as humanity on the planet, or else the Earth is going to start fighting back. And that's we're already seeing this, right? I mean, climate change, you know, and cataclysmic activities. Hey, you had an earthquake in New York today, right? This is the planet saying, hey folks, wake up. You know, you humans. You know, you species there, you know, as the dominant species on the planet right now, we have this responsibility and it really, really does come down to how we give back, how we as a species give back. So personally, extraction of resources, utilizing timber, utilizing fossil fuels, utilizing hydroelectric utilizing these resources, the energy sources of the planet is an important aspect of how we engage here. But how do we do that responsibly with a form that we're feeding back into this system as opposed to just extracting, extract, extract, take, take, take, which is predominantly what the history has been here for the last couple thousand years. So how do we actually turn this around?

Lance Gould: [00:54:28] So important, Patricia. And actually I wanted to jump in for one second just and it's it's a little early for me to say this because the earthquake just happened today. And I don't want to speculate, but when you're talking about extractive purposes, extractive practices, fracking has shown to lead to earthquakes in places like Ohio, places like Oklahoma. I don't know, it's too early to say that that was a factor here, but it's certainly when when you have an earthquake in New York City, the first thing I thought was, oh my goodness, is [00:55:00] this is this related to fracking?

Patricia Sims: [00:55:02] That's a really important question, you know, because I don't know what fault lines are around, but we're both. It's part of the Canadian Shield, in fact, which is often considered one of the most solid oldest parts of bedrock on the planet. So why is there an earthquake there? I mean, living on the west coast of Canada or, you know, California on this side? Yeah, we have fault lines. There's there's tectonic plate shifting and moving that's going on. But happening in that part of the part of the world is an interesting question. And I know fracking is like like to me shocking to not think that it disruption of Earth crust is not going to have some some impact on how the Earth is going to be moving and shaking. I mean, that's going to happen.

Lance Gould: [00:55:47] In the time we have left, let's hear see if we hear from from MIT, John and Christy, on the same interconnectedness question. And I know, Patricia,

you have a hard stop at 330. So we're going to try to try to go through this as quickly as we can. But one of the three of you, please jump in on that question of interconnectedness.

Mayte Gonzalez: [00:56:06] Lance and colleagues, I would say I would like I like to think that a good entry point to address these people nature, equation is to, to be rooted in the rights based approach. If we think at the same time on the rights of the people and the rights of nature, then then we are starting in a new in a new path. This means that at the same time that that we will be working to achieve an ecosystem outcomes, we will be contributing to a livelihoods and benefit for the people. If we change our mindset and we conduct our conservation efforts in such a way, then it will be we will be able to talk in a few years of a just transition process. Thank you.

Lance Gould: [00:56:54] John? Kristy? You have some quick words to jump in? Go ahead Kristy.

Kristy Drutman: [00:57:00] Yeah, I was just going to say, you know, when I heard that question, I just think about, the opportunity for intergenerational collaboration. I think that there's a huge opportunity where, you know, it can't just be on young people to solve this issue. It needs to be all different generations and people who come from all different sectors and leadership, to take action on this. And I hope that people can figure out how they can mentor, support, nourish the next generation, resource, support our initiatives and our work on the ground. Hopefully we can teach the same on on our end.

Lance Gould: [00:57:41] Thank you, Kristy and John. You got the last word on this for before we conclude with some closing words from Grace.

John Holm: [00:57:48] Yeah, I think two points I just want to bring up to close. One, all of this is connected. So climate itself is connected to economic development, health and livelihoods outcomes. Until we start working on the interconnected nature of all the problems that we have on the planet, we're wasting time. You can't silo climate. I think, number two, I want to be very clear that dystopia and utopia, it's not binary. There's a lot of beautiful lives right now happening. There's co-ops. There's there's women doing amazing things on the grounds in indigenous cultures. The world is not falling off the cliff if we're looking for examples of other ways, but the system itself, the media.

Lance Gould: [00:58:27] John, unfortunately we just lost you for a second. You may come back, but John we lost you for a second. Want to go ahead? Uh oh. We're having some connectivity issues with John. I'm going to turn this over to Grace to close.

Grace Chalmers: [00:58:42] Thank you. Lance.

Lance Gould: [00:58:43] I'm sorry. John, we lost John. We're gonna. We're gonna cut you off. I'm sorry. We had some audio issues there, but we're going to turn it over to Grace. Grace, please. Close us out.

Grace Chalmers: [00:58:50] Thanks, Lance. And thank you all for panelists, for this amazing conversation and for sharing your perspective perspectives here today. You're all doing such phenomenal work with consequences that seem bound to have much more impact on our future than ever before. That concludes our program today. But it is the beginning of Earth Month, and Earth Day is April 22nd. So I hope everyone in our audience and all of our panelists can stay in touch this month as we prepare to truly celebrate the Earth. To rewatch this video podcast or to see a transcript, go to the Samuel Lawrence Foundation website in the coming days. The website is SamuelLawrenceFoundation.org. And thank you so much to World Elephant Day, to Brown Girl Green, Pyxera Global and the IUCN for their participation in today's event, as well as to Blue Planet Alliance, one of our supporting partners. To learn more about the critical work that all of our participating groups are doing to advance women's rights, Earth initiatives, sustainability initiatives, and just to stay informed about upcoming events, sign up for the Samuel Lawrence Foundation Newsletter on our website. And as always, thank you so much to Lance and our partner Brooklyn Story Lab. Make sure you join us next month for the May edition of the First Friday Series. Thank you all very, very much. [01:00:00] And goodbye.