



by [Lisa M.P. Munoz](#)

When I was growing up, the only women scientists I ever heard about were Marie Curie and Florence Nightingale. Now, my 9-year-old daughter reads stories about Lise Meitner (pictured at right; [read her story here](#) if you haven't yet, incredible!), Katherine Johnson, Ada Lovelace, and other scientists, many of whose contributions are only widely surfacing in modern times — and I have the privilege of interviewing scientists from different backgrounds weekly, painting a vastly different picture from my childhood of who scientists are.



In our programming at the SCL, we strive to bring this different picture to our viewers — not only bringing the awe of discovery to the screen but also the human side. Showcasing diverse voices in science is about more than Black History Month or Women's History Month, though they give great opportunity for discussion; it's an ongoing, daily mission to connect individuals and communities to science. Whether through documentaries like [Picture A Scientist](#) or short films, like "Finding Faith in Science" (discussed below), film allows us to see scientists in new ways.

VOICES IN SCIENCE

Connecting with Communities to Engage in Science

In our recently premiered film "[Finding Faith in Science](#)," we heard from molecular biologist Tshaka Cunningham on how he connects with marginalized communities through discussions about the intersection of faith, genetics, and personalized medicine. The message resonated with PhD scientist-turned-communicator [Mónica Feliú-Mójer](#) (pictured at right in the front center), a director at SCL who also does work for [Ciencia Puerto Rico](#), a global community of more than 15,000 scientists, students, educators and allies who are committed to advancing science in Puerto Rico.



Working with science outreach and community engagement specialist [Edmy Ayala Rosado](#) (picture at right on the far left) and others, Feliú-Mójer sees their work in Puerto Rico mirroring the approach of Cunningham — tapping into their scientific training, personal background, and culture to "engage historically underserved and overlooked audiences, especially Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speakers, with science," Feliú-Mójer says.

Engaging those audiences in science is critical, Ayala Rosado says, as science can serve as a bridge between people of different backgrounds and religions and is an important tool for health and wellness. "Scientific knowledge in the hands of our people translates into making better life decisions, which lead to a better quality of life for themselves and future generations," she says. "It makes me feel extremely hopeful to see there are scientists who build up their academic careers and go on to serve their communities. Here in Puerto Rico, that has made the difference between sickness and health during this pandemic."

A great example of that community-centered work is [Aquí Nos Cuidamos](#) (which

translates to “here we take care of each other”), a project of Ciencia Puerto Rico that promotes COVID-19 prevention and the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized communities in Puerto Rico through culturally relevant multimedia education and community engagement. Through this project, Ayala Rosado and Feliú-Mójer have seen firsthand the importance of trust and taking the time to build relationships between scientists and marginalized communities.

“Scientists must be aware of our own cultural lens, biases, and privilege, and how these elements impact how we engage our audiences and how they might perceive us,” Feliú-Mójer says. “We must then use this understanding to guide our efforts. This is something that Dr. Cunningham exemplifies brilliantly in the film: he — a Black man of faith who is a scientist — taps into his identities, culture, and training to have conversations about genomic sciences with *his* community.”

Says Ayala Rosado: “Science in the lab does nothing else than become a talking point in privileged conversations and in presentations if it is not put through a culturally relevant lens that assures it gets to the hands of the people whose lives will benefit from it. From the pandemic to climate change, our communities need and demand that the scientific community continue to involve themselves in these types of projects.”

NOW PLAYING

Corals: On the Brink



Coral reefs are truly magnificent ecosystems that support an abundance of marine life. As climate change warms the oceans, corals are dying out. Can modern genetic tools, like CRISPR-Cas9, help save them? In [our latest short film](#), we hear from scientists who are already using genomic tools to better understand corals and who hope to one day make them more adaptive to climate change.

JOIN US

Exploring Trees at the Exploratorium



If you are in the Bay Area, mark your calendars for the evening of April 14, 2022. We're collaborating with the Exploratorium museum for a special [After Dark event](#), at

which our new short film "Fire Among the Giants" will premiere. The film explores the catastrophic wildfire at the world famous Big Basin State Park in the old growth redwood forest of the Santa Cruz mountains. The After Dark program will include a panel discussion with two of the stars of the film, Portia Halbert (an environmental scientist) and Christian Schwarz (a mycologist). We hope to see you there!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Should We Use Biotech to Save Forests?



Last month, we hosted a stimulating panel discussion "[Can CRISPR be used to make forests resilient to climate change?](#)" featuring the stars of the short film "[Saving the American Chestnut](#)": Dr. Jason Delborne (North Carolina State), Dr. Doria Gordon (Environmental Defense Fund), Dr. Sofía Valenzuela Águila (University of Chile), and Dr. Jack Wang (North Carolina State). Dr. Gordon summarizes the lesson so far for use of genomic editing technology in forest ecology and beyond: "We need these days every technology in the box to help us navigate the environmental ills that we have created and the health ills that we have created. So I wouldn't reject or accept [any technology] outright; I would ask some targeted questions. And as we all gain experience with this technology, we'll get better at those questions." She then goes on to talk about the importance of bringing success stories to light:

"The American chestnut story is great, how we've changed some of our crops so we use fewer chemicals – there are some great stories and we ought to be telling those stories and learning those stories and putting them into our encyclopedia so we can ask better questions when the next product comes along."



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