

Niveen Abi Ghannam 0:02

Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us in another episode of SciCommBites videos. Today we have Elizabeth Weinberg to talk about her new book *unsettling*. Thank you so much for joining us today, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Weinberg 0:17

Hey, thanks so much for having me.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 0:20

Can you please go ahead and introduce yourself first? Tell us, are you?

Elizabeth Weinberg 0:26

Sure. So my name is Elizabeth Weinberg. I am a storyteller and science educator. I am the author of the book, *unsettling* surviving extinction together. And I've also done science communication for a number of different organizations, including Noah's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries doing ocean conservation, science, communication, and more recently for the US Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, doing community coordination and science communication about the Arctic.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 0:54

Thank you, Elizabeth, what is the top one thing that you want your readers to take away from your book?

Elizabeth Weinberg 1:00

Yeah, so I think the number one thing for people to take away from *unsettling* is that tackling the climate crisis will require us to make some really major changes. So we've got to grapple with the colonial and racist history that got us to this point, as well as to dismantle the colonial and capitalist structures that are at this point, really keeping the climate crisis at this peak. Also, for people who are science communication practitioners, I'd love for them to take away that art and Creative Writing are really fruitful spaces for science communication.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 1:31

That's wonderful. So now let's take a step back and tell us about the context in which you had decided to write this particular book, what gap did you find around you that you felt okay, I need to write a book about this.

Elizabeth Weinberg 1:47

Yeah, so *unsettling* brings together queerness and the climate crisis to sort of see what might happen if we look at it through that lens. And I had been doing queer activism with my community. And at the same time, I had been doing science communication, and ocean conservation work professionally. And often, I felt like those two things were in

very different realms, I was either in my sort of queer community, and they were focused on other issues, which is very reasonable. And or I was in the climate crisis and science communication community, and we really weren't focused on bringing in queer theory, or queer lenses, or many, so many different social lenses. On top of that, I knew that the climate crisis was most likely to impact marginalized folks. So including my queer community. And so I wanted to understand what the impacts were going to be. And already were on my community. But I also wanted to look at it through not just like a deficit space, you know, I wanted to see what it was that queerness could bring to the table and what it can teach us about the climate crisis. So that's where the book came in.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 2:54

Wow. So if you are to tell us, what was your purpose? And I think you touched on that a little bit, what what is the book purpose? And who is your imagined audience? Who would benefit from it? And the scope of the content that you ended up including?

Elizabeth Weinberg 3:12

Yeah, so philosophically, or like argumentatively. I mean, so the purpose really depends on how you look at it. If you're looking at the argument, I want to reframe what we need to be doing to tackle the climate crisis effectively. But I want to explore how the history of colonialism got us to this place. And I want to understand what we change in terms of capitalism and thinking about how we think about race and class and sexuality, to get out of the climate crisis. And I want to understand, you know, what queerness can teach us about the climate crisis. But it's also you know, it's a creative work, and art. So I also want to explore, you know, beauty and feeling and all of those things that are inherent in nature and in the natural world. So interested in how like Greek shows up and how Joy shows up. And also, I just wanted to share some of the fascinating science that I found. So like, there's a there's a section about whale falls, which is what my Zoom background is right now. In terms of, I think, first and foremost, I am writing to other queer folks, but I definitely think the book resonates beyond that audience. Anyone who cares, even a little bit about nature or about science or about the climate crisis, I think the book will resonate. And I do bring in a lot of different sources in terms of scope. You know, it's got scientific literature, it's got history, personal experiences, pop culture, there's an essay about Disney in there. It's all to really explore the different facets of the climate crisis.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 4:37

Oh, and I'm interested in that too. Like, basically the process by which you collected information and whether the content is basically a collection of literature on this or was it original work that you ended up doing for the book?

Elizabeth Weinberg 4:58

Yeah, so if you're very strong believe that science shouldn't be separated from the rest of the world, and that it shouldn't just be scientific literature over here. And then personal experience over here. And, you know, over here and really like all of these different buckets, which I don't know, maybe you may have had scientist, but I think it makes me a good science communication practitioner, because science is really interwoven with everything else. So when I was writing the book, I would start usually with a particular landscape, or a particular animal or particular concept, like, you know, extinction. And I would start there, and I would bring in scientific literature. And you know, what, that sort of like different aspects of science, but then also find sources on history and talk to scientists and think about, you know, reflect on my own experience, it's not original science. I'm not a scientist, I very much feel that I'm in the science communicator and storyteller bucket, but there is a lot of science in it.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 5:59

Yeah, I see. And what are so going through this process that you described? What are the top 123 findings that you feel were surprising or unique? Or you found him along the way that really impressed you?

Elizabeth Weinberg 6:16

Yeah, I think so. So I think unsettling is less of a like, investigation or study and more of a exploration or just sort of like a following of curiosity and following these different threads. So I mean, you know, there's like, the sort of level line that is, climate, the climate change and the climate crisis are very much a social justice issue. But then there's just like, a lot of really interesting science, you know, I learned that will poop drives ecosystems, as do whale hauls, which means that, you know, commercial whaling is, has basically totally disrupted the ocean ecosystem. And so So learning about how that has changed, and how it continues to change as well, populations come back, like that was fascinating to me. I learned a ton about coyote resilience and sort of the history of coyotes in North America. Um, and so they're not like, you know, they're not scientific findings. I didn't discover them. You know, I think discovery in science, we could, we could talk for an hour about that. But I learned things about, and I got to build metaphors and images around that. But I thought that that was really fun.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 7:22

Yeah, and that is exactly what I was asking you about. I I love those stories that an example that you gave, what, what impact do you hope that your book would achieve? To being used, especially by science, communication practitioners, but the overall impact as well?

Elizabeth Weinberg 7:45

Yeah, I think in terms of the impact, but I'd like to see it achieve.

I mean, on a on a big scale, I hope people see themselves in the climate crisis. And people understand that it's important to understand the history and to understand how we got to this point and how we need to really reframe our relationship to each other and to the land. For science, communication practitioners in particular. I hope that they take from it that science and science communication and art and Creative Writing can really be intertwined, and that we don't need to treat sciences or rezone bucket over on its own. But really, there are lots of different ways to do science communication, and embracing those different complexities can be really fruitful.

Niveen Abi Ghannam 8:28

Thank you so much for your time. This was wonderful and good luck with your book. I really enjoyed this.

Elizabeth Weinberg 8:36

Thank you so much, bye.

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