

# Decolonialising Green Spaces:

Intercultural dialogues about  
climate conservation,  
sustainability, engagement and  
inclusion



For the book launch on International Women's Day 2023

 #IWD2023WOCinnature

"We need to see ourselves as part of the fragile web of life, rather than as the masters of it."

**Vandana Shiva\***, from the book  
**'Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace'**

\* Vandana Shiva is an Indian scholar and environmental activist who has written extensively on a range of social justice issues around sustainable agriculture, seed sovereignty and biodiversity conservation. She is the founder of Navdanya, a non-governmental organization that promotes seed saving, organic farming, and the protection of biodiversity in India. You can read more around her work on [Navdanya](#).

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# Vision

This seminar series is set within the context of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and access to green spaces for systematically underrepresented communities.

The series aims to connect community and conservation experts from minority ethnic organisations, individual activists from underrepresented groups, and academics who operate in the areas of interculturality and decoloniality. The series will represent an opportunity to encourage knowledge exchange and dialogue around the notions of belonging, inclusivity and diverse forms of engagement with common natural resources.

# Introduction

This is a **live book** that will be transformed and shaped through engagement with contributors to the seminar series and beyond.

The purpose of the book is to centre the narratives and the experiences of women of colour whose work aims to bring about participatory social change in natural green and blue spaces, enhance visibility of structurally underrepresented groups, and support the wider discourse around belonging and identity in the perceived culturally homogenous countryside in the UK.

We draw on a decolonial theoretical lens to centre minority ethnic narratives and lived experiences, those voices that are often invisible in green spaces. In adopting this approach, we pay deep attention to minority ethnic perceptions around how access, inclusion, sense of belonging, and the ways in which a genuinely embedded approach to diverse representation can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing in its broadest sense.

Our ambition is to develop an expert network and knowledge exchange of key people across disciplines, ages and cultural backgrounds, to create opportunities for intercultural dialogues and engagement with policy makers.

# Meet the Team



Dr Geeta Ludhra is a Lecturer in Education at Brunel University, London. Before her academic career, Geeta worked as a school leader and teacher across West London primary schools, with an interest in bilingual children and diverse literature. At Brunel, she has led the PGCE Initial Teacher Education programme, the English and Masters in Teaching programmes. Whilst at Brunel, Geeta found herself engaging in exciting theoretical conversations with Dr Giuliana Ferri, and they collaborated on planning and teaching the ‘Decolonising the Curriculum’ module offered to PGCE students, and also decolonizing theories to Doctoral researchers. These shared interests around ‘decolonizing’ and language use, led to the planning of this seminar series. Geeta currently works part-time to allow space for caring duties and also to focus on developing her social enterprise community work as part of Dadima’s CIC, where she develops nature engagement activities in the countryside. Geeta’s interest in changing the narrative for people of colour in natural green spaces, stems from personal experiences of racism, and questions around power, privilege and belonging. Geeta also runs a women of colour feminist series at Brunel University, and a South Asian women’s writing group.

Dr Geeta Ludhra | Lecturer in Education | Brunel University London

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Dr Giuliana Ferri is a Lecturer in Language and Intercultural Communication at the Institute of Education, UCL, in the Department of Culture, Communication and Media working on the MA Intercultural Communication. Before that, Giuliana worked as a teacher in inner London schools and at Brunel University leading on the teacher education programme as well as acting as the Department Tutor for Doctoral Researchers. While at Brunel, Giuliana collaborated with Dr Geeta Ludhra on the Decolonising the Curriculum module offered to students on the PGCE course, which created a synergy of interests that lead to the current seminar series. Giuliana’s interest in multiculturalism, languages and identity stems from her work as a teacher and from her own experience as a migrant in the UK. She enjoys hiking in the South Downs.

Dr Giuliana Ferri | Lecturer in Language and Intercultural Communication | Institute of Education, UCL

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Michelle Lee is a doctoral researcher exploring national identity building in Hong Kong. Her research involves the analysis of the education policies and curriculums in Hong Kong using the perspectives of post-colonial literature and critical pedagogy. The PhD research journey has opened up many new analytical dimensions for Michelle to explore the lasting impact of colonialism on the cultural, social and identity construction of the world around her. She has come to appreciate the importance of connecting like-minded individuals to empower and advocate social causes. Michelle is excited to work with Geeta and Giuliana to explore the interplay of interculturality, decoloniality and environmental conservation through the sharing of all the amazing contributors in this book.

Michelle Lee | Doctoral Researcher | Brunel University London

 @MichelleWYLee



Photo by Luca Bravo on Unsplash



**Like a diamond that forms deep inside the Earth's crust, I resist and challenge the forces that try to tame and subdue my brilliance. In doing so, I shine brighter so others may follow.**



My passion and expertise for telling stories about rock, means that I often enter spaces where I am seen as an outsider and made to feel like an imposter. But behind my frozen smile as I encounter these moments, I embody a steely determination to never give up. For each obstacle I encounter represents an opportunity for me to grow more resilient, inspire others and create change.

I am an award-winning Earth Scientist, presenter and advocate for diversity in natural heritage spaces. For over 20 years, I have worked as a learning and engagement professional in the natural heritage sector helping people of all backgrounds understand how our planet evolved, changed, and survived over 4.5 billion years.

I appear regularly on-screen, engaging audiences with my insight and knowledge about geology, landscapes and fossils. I have been an expert contributor for a number of television programmes including BBC4 Beach Live, ITV's This Morning and Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh, Channel 5's My Cornwall with Fern Britton, BBC2 Villages by the Sea and Channel 4's Britain's Novel Landscapes. I have published numerous academic papers on glacial geology, developed award winning teaching resources and won

the Royal Geographical Society Geographical Award for excellence in educating the public about the Jurassic Coast. I have also been awarded the RH Worth Medal by the Geological Society, a Silver Commendation from the Geographical Association and won a National Diversity Award in 2020 as a Positive Role Model for Race, Faith and Religion.

I was Born and bred in Slough and had a humble upbringing in an urban environment where I grew to love the natural world through holidays to places such as Kenya, which is where my family originate from. I have a BSc. in Earth Science and a Ph.D. in Geography where I specialised in glacial geology. My diverse background and voice bring a unique perspective to my work. In 2021, I was longlisted for the prestigious Nan Shepherd Prize for my first ever book proposal exploring the secret stories of rocks. My debut non-fiction book, *The Whispers of Rock*, will be published by the Little, Brown Publishing Group in September 2025.

I live in Dorset, close to the Jurassic Coast, in a house filled with rocks and fossils.

**Dr Anjana  
Khatwa**  
(she/her)

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**Just showing up to the launch point is a huge achievement.**



Adya has always believed: “Just showing up to the launch point is a huge achievement”. She recently realised how many layers existed to that belief. Adya used to think it was just about difficulties travelling to rural blue spaces for a day of paddling, the expense it incurs and juggling an all consuming hobby with full time work. She has recently realised that her existence in paddlesport as a woman of colour is an act of rebellion and simply showing up on some days is an achievement in itself.

Adya founded “People of Colour Paddle” in 2022 because she was tired of being the only person of colour on the water. People of Colour Paddle was a small idea in Adya’s mind for two years before it became reality. After kayaking and canoeing for nearly ten years, coaching paddlers on the water for five years and paddleboarding for three years, Adya knew what she wanted to achieve but didn’t quite know how to get to that goal. The aim was simply to normalise the participation of people of colour in paddlesport in the UK, with the broader goal of connecting people back to nature.

After connecting with over a thousand people of colour in the UK, this organisation has engaged with the community who have embraced this work and idea with open arms across the nation. Founding the first paddlesports club dedicated to the inclusion of people of colour in the UK has been an overwhelming yet exhilarating, exhausting and yet, energising experience. Adya’s work and coaching practices with People of Colour Paddle have been described as an effort to decolonise the sport, as she questions and dismantles structures that exclude people of colour, and other systematically excluded groups. Adya hopes to change the image of paddlesport from one of conquering nature, to immersing ourselves in it via water. People of Colour Paddle exist to create opportunities for all people of colour in the UK to participate in paddlesport and connect people back to our natural spaces.



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**For as long as I can remember I have always had the greatest interest in storytelling; I believe it's the most powerful form of communication we have, and by telling stories I not only want to raise awareness and create real change by crafting narratives and sharing others' stories, but I also want to be able to express myself as authentically and strongly as possible, something I believe as a trans woman of colour in this space as being a rarity sadly and thus extremely important. It is something I have done for many years via writing, making it core to much of what I do**

My name is Jasmine Isa Qureshi, and I am – I guess in all the many ways I have restructured myself throughout my career – a writer and a storyteller. I am a Journalist (penning articles for a large variety of magazines, e-journals, blogs, etc. from Gay Times and Gal-Dem to Birdwatch and BBC Wildlife), a wildlife television/media researcher – previously working at Wild Space Productions on a series for Netflix, BBC Natural History Unit / BBC Earth, and Sound Off Films, a freelance wildlife film-maker, an Ambassador for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (a HUGE passion of mine is entomology and specifically pollinating insects), the Engagement Officer for the youth led organization A Focus On Nature (focussing on providing resources and gateways for young people to get involved with conservation and natural history), an Activist, a Marine Biologist, a Poet and a speaker/presenter.

I am absurdly passionate about wildlife, conservation and the environment, and if I can't be found on the coast, combing for marine life washed up on the shoreline, and exploring the ruins and new builds of cities for signs of nature, I'm usually speaking and writing too much about insects and arthropods...or searching for them in the soil.

As a speaker and journalist I have also found a place for myself to share my passion for topics such as diversity in workplaces and in all the subjects I am involved with, politics and how it affects science and nature but also the social sciences, sexuality, identity

and gender, particularly trans right and the understanding of these; and have been able to contribute to events around the country such as Norwich Science Festival, Cheltenham Science Festival, etc. As a presenter I've been involved with CBeebies (talking about starfish funnily enough), Edinburgh Science Festival and VOX Media.

An example of one of the coolest things I've done is to have featured in Attitude Magazine on a 9-page piece on Ocean conservation, intersectionality and queer theory, alongside acclaimed drag artist Bimini, Activist Noga Levy Rappaport and wildlife broadcaster Dan O'Neill, which also included a fantastic film made with Freeborne Media, all done on the beautiful Dungeness Reserve coastline in Kent.

Quite recently I have had the honour of performing spoken word and poetry pieces for/at the Natural History Museum (a place I am SO proud to say I've spoken at TWICE now), and Mehfil Arts Centre, centring my own experiences and understanding of nature, sexuality and race, tying them together and at times... taking them apart.

Tying this all up is really the nuts and bolts of what I do...it's all about intersectionality and the fact that I've managed to rack up all this experience I think demonstrates how varied and queer we can all be in our approach to anything, a sentiment I want to continue to explore as I grow and thrive.

Jasmine Isa  
Qureshi  
(they /she)

 @GoWildForBees

 @wildheartwithacamera

# Geeta Ludhra

(she/her)

 @educatinggeeta

 @dadimaschilternswalks  
@educatinggeeta



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**As a grass-roots community walk leader, I challenge what it means for a British South Asian woman over 50 to work in nature spaces. As a feminist of colour, an educational nature activist, I'm a 'space invader' and also a 'safe space creator' in the countryside. I'm slowly changing the narrative through acts of community walking, co-creating educational nature events, and sitting on a Conservation Board where I'm the only person of colour. 'Nature is for everyone' they say, so why do I feel like a body 'out-of-place' when I enter the countryside and the conservation sector? I created a safe space through Dadima's walking movement; it's a space that looks and feels different – a nature space that I'd never seen or belonged to, but today feels like my Mother Earth family.**

I'm a British South Asian woman over 50, and I bring various identities to my community-based nature work. I'm a lecturer in education, a mother to two daughters, and a grandmother. I lead a nature social enterprise called Dadima's CIC and feel privileged to have walked and talked with so many interesting women of colour across all ages and backgrounds, particularly from a South Asian heritage. My academic lens of Black feminism and as a narrative researcher, has come to life through my community practice work. I draw wisdom from my Indian heritage with pride, acknowledging the earth knowledge, courage and sacrifices of my great, great grandmothers. Growing up in a patriarchal family, I never take for granted my freedom to roam the land freely for pleasure, yet alone lead others to explore. As I walk and talk with women who have historically been 'marginalised', we share cultural stories, we laugh, cry, listen to each other with kindness and empathy, all in the safe space of Mother Nature - 'Maa Dharti' in Hindi. Walking and talking in the countryside is my form of gentle activism, and I 'take up space' in hope -hope to steer the change I've always wanted to

see and experience. So much makes me happy when organising Dadima's nature events: sharing heritage Indian snacks, to include masala chai which I brew with love for strangers and friends; connecting people through new friendships; encouraging families to explore the countryside, often as a first-time experience; educating communities on nature experiences so that they want to care for, protect and be part of nature to experience the benefits and joy. Diversity in nature seems so natural and obvious to me when we look at how wildlife and species co-exist – so why does the reality look and feel very different when it comes to humans? I hope that one day, race will not be a point of discussion when discussing how we connect with nature. The words of Vandana Shiva chime closely to the caring nature philosophy that underpins Dadima's nature work: "In traditional agriculture, the soil is the mother. She's the mother who gives, to whom you must give back." If as a society we all treated nature with the love and respect that our mothers deserve, we would be telling a very different story today.

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**Prithvi' is a Sanskrit word for Earth Energy. Each drop of essential oil embodies the essence of its ancestral roots, spiritual and healing powers, this one drop contains the energy of the earth, as such it should be treated as a sacred gift from nature.**



**Priya  
Ganatra**  
(she/her)

 @priyag77

Priya is an Ambassador for Dadima's CIC educational nature group and has worked closely with Geeta Ludhra over the last 3 years. She has been introducing essential oils knowledge and activities to Dadima's nature walkers as part of her Ambassador role. Priya presents the essential oils through the lens of their healing and spiritual qualities and centres their ancestral heritage and the sacred wisdom of these oils. In July 2022, at an outdoor story telling event in the Chilterns (as part of South Asian Heritage Month), Priya presented the audience with one of her favourite essential oils, Tulsi (Holy Basil) native to India. She took the participants on a journey through Tulsi folk stories, history, medicinal and spiritual benefits of the plant and the essential oil, inspiring connections to the Indian sacred plant through the special aroma.

Priya began her journey with the essential oils through delivering complementary therapies within a healthcare setting after qualifying with The Institute of Traditional Herbal Medicine and Aromatherapy in 2009. During her time volunteering at a Hospice, Priya continued developing her professional interest in end of life care, enhanced her clinical training and taught hospice nurses simple hand massage techniques so that they could understand and experience the benefits of complementary therapy. In 2017, Priya moved to the University College London Hospital (UCLH) Cancer Centre where she continued to offer treatments within the chemotherapy and outpatient unit. Whilst at UCLH, Priya spent time in the Radiotherapy unit blending bespoke aroma stick inhalers with patients waiting for their treatments. Priya took this intervention further by creatively using aromatherapy with children and young people, utilising her skills as a qualified Youth and Community Worker.

In early 2020, Priya joined the charity 'Spread a Smile', where she has been delivering face to face and online individual and group therapeutic well-being sessions, combining the use of aroma sticks with breathing techniques, to parents caring for a child/young person with an illness. Priya took this further by evaluating the impact on the well-being of the parents and presented the research at an International Clinical Conference 'Botanica 2022' and to professional Aromatherapists in Brazil. The research was later published in The International Federation of Professional Aromatherapists, In Essence Journal, Vol. 21, No. 1- Autumn/Winter 2022.

Today, Priya is taking her work with aromatherapy, informed by ancestral wisdom, into nature spaces and hospitals. Dadima's walking group were so impressed at how an aromatherapy activity through Juniper essential oil at the start of a walk, opened up their senses to notice and experience nature differently.



# Nature teaches us about the gift of plurality.



Nature is an integral part of British cities. As most of us live in urban areas – we tend to think of nature as something out there. Nature is something in here. Nature is inside our cities and also inside of ourselves as we shape the cities around us. I primarily work in places where people grow plants in cities – allotment sites and guerrilla garden spaces. What I love about these spaces is they are community spaces but also allow a lot of room for individual practice. It's a beautiful balance. Allotments are a curious piece of English material cultural heritage, but they are also routinely more diverse in people and plants than the cities that surround them. People whose heritage is from all around the world grow alongside each other. Sometimes they don't even speak a common language, and they still form strong connections through a shared love of plants, nature and growing.

It may sound like a truism, but nature really does have the capacity to heal. During the growing season of 2021, my friend Sam and I recreated an allotment in the style of the year 1918 on Elder Stubbs Charity Allotment site in Oxford. We asked the question 'what does it mean to use nature to heal when the world is struggling to cope with a pandemic?' The responses to this question took

forms that crossed usual boundaries between different people, plants and more-than-humans. Visitors to the site engaged in planting, ate food harvested from the plot and listened to the poetry that I and fellow poets shared with them. As the visits continued, it became clear that the site had become a living memorial or as one visitor put it 'a living archive'. As people sunk their hands into the soil of the plot they were reaching out to and being touched by the people and more-than-humans who had cultivated on the same plot over 100 years ago. Ancestors who had survived the First World War and the 1918-1919 pandemic which meant that we could survive too. One visitor wrote in the visitor's book that it was, 'a truly healing experience'.

My artist's journal of poems *Portal: 1918 Allotment* uses art, diary entries, short essays and poems to detail the development of the project. An online exhibition of it can also be found on the [Museum of English Rural Life's website](#). What I have learned from my research (my doctoral thesis is entitled 'Banal Utopia: Urban gardening as a practice for materialising utopic spaces in cities') is that our relationship with nature in cities is symbiotic. We sustain nature by what we grow, and nature also sustains us.

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**Empathy is remembering that everybody has a story. Multiple stories. And remembering to make space to hear someone else's story before immediately telling your own.**

**Kae Tempest, On Connection**

I can feel like an interloper in this space – I come from a mixed background, with white working class British and Armenian-Iranian roots. I have experienced great privilege in my life, but the roots of my tree draws its water from many places, which comes with positive and negative experiences around acceptance, identity and belonging.

After almost 20 years working in museums (mainly in collections management), I moved into the landscape sector. The issues and opportunities are the same, and the landscape becomes your exhibition space, its monuments and places your collection, its stories and narratives your interpretation to revisit, to critique, to review. I use my professional practice to support people and networks working in the space of equity and decolonising practice in the cultural and landscape sectors to develop and deliver the activities *they* have identified as important. My role is facilitation – to provide or create space and resource for individuals and communities to tell their own stories, in their own way, with their own words. Practically this can look like anything from funding bid support, to networking people to increase reach and profile. I also work to address power structures, to build trust and address ways in which organisations create barriers sometimes unknowingly.

My interest is in supporting the networks of creatives who are using the cultural heritage of countryside to create new cultures of connection to landscape, telling stories that blossom and connect people to place. This is sometimes

about telling hard truths, but which result in a more complete and nuanced story, one often more relevant to contemporary communities today.

I have been supporting other contributors (and future contributors) to this e-book, mainly in background ways that I hope are helpful. As a museum practitioner, there is often a hesitancy in taking the first step in this area of work, and my only advice is to use your power, privilege and potential (however great or small) to open doors, provide resource, make space, broaden opportunities and create networks of collaborators and peers.

I am very much a 'Jack of All Trades', having had a career including roles with Reading Museum, Science Museum Group and South East Museum Development. I've spent time in the company of early incunabula and Richard III as Collections Manager at the Society of Antiquaries of London, and with Roman cemetery assemblages and Bronze Age warriors at The Novium. I have also been Vice-Chair of the Society for Museum Archaeology, was privileged to mentor emerging professionals through the Museum Futures programme, and currently sit on Arts Council England's UK Accreditation Committee. I am now the Cultural Heritage Lead for the South Downs National Park Authority. You can find out more about my work in countryside in the Museum of English Rural Life [Changing Perspectives in Countryside](#) online exhibition.



## We sit in-between, professionals who continually confront the challenges of being a minority in the lands of our birth and outsiders in our ancestral lands.



In environmental conservation, diaspora researchers play a role in two prominent debates. In the Global North with the rising importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies, diaspora brings opportunities around moves to “diversify.” In the Global South, colonial legacies persist in the practices of extractive and/or parachute science, and diaspora can help drive improvements or exploit them. I write as a British-born East African Indian woman of colour working in the UK conservation sector. My parents were born in Kenya, while three of my grandparents were born in India. Diaspora like me neither share the same histories, experiences, and inherited relationships of our colleagues, nor the same challenges as our contemporaries in the Global South. We sit in-between, professionals who continually confront the challenges of being a minority in the lands of our birth and outsiders in our ancestral lands.

I work on developing and applying socio-ecological approaches to a range of environmental health issues, with a strong interest in pro-environmental behaviour and nature benefits. I embed approaches that have social safeguarding at their core, finding solutions through leveraging achievable, fairer, and equitable decision making and action, for shared human and environmental well-being. I am an interdisciplinary conservation practitioner, with ten years’ experience working with NGOs, business, academia, and scientists. I have joined collaborations on several projects across the UK and its overseas territories, Africa and Asia, looking at the development equitable and scalable solutions for community-based marine and freshwater conservation.

Currently, I engage with ZSLs work and act as external advisor on several Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and decolonising conservation initiatives. This includes work to break down barriers and diversify engagement with marine conservation in Wales with [Project SIARC](#) | Sharks Inspiring Action and Research with Communities. I am community technical lead for our Darwin funded work in the UKOTs looking at plastic waste reduction through inclusive people engagement and have fed into the Great British Ocean Coalition’s statement on EDI working in the UKOTs. I am a collaborator on an existing Royal Geographical Society funded project looking at how to achieve more fairer and equitable conservation in Kenya. A career highlight was co-organising a hybrid workshop that brought together nearly 100 conservation practitioners to discuss and work together towards a more ethical sector. I also sit on the steering committee for the [Thames Connections](#) project led by Dilawar Hussain at Thames21 which aims to connect diverse communities with River Thames Catchment conservation. I also provide expertise cross departmental, to collaborators and other conservation organisations on the topics of EDI and decolonisation of conservation spaces. Working closely with organisation development and training teams to support individual and organisational learning journeys in this space. Through some of these projects, I have been involved in several publications on the topic, this includes being an author in a dedicated series to this topic led by Dr Asha de Vos; [Globalising Conservation by Confronting Parachute Science](#), and looking at [decolonising spaces of knowledge production in Kenya](#).

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# Alinah Azadeh

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**I want my readers, listeners and fellow wanderers to experience this landscape as an open embrace, as global imaginary, as diverse, shifting and in need of radical care, as if it were a relative. I want them to feel that our interconnected futures can be transformed, through the stories we tell and the actions those stories provoke.**



‘I want my readers, listeners and fellow wanderers to experience this landscape as an open embrace, as global imaginary, as diverse, shifting and in need of radical care, as if it were a relative. I want them to feel that our interconnected futures can be transformed, through the stories we tell and the actions those stories provoke’. This is my guiding principle since I began my decolonial work in the Sussex landscape since 2019, sparked by a speculative fiction story I wrote set in 2053, along the eroding chalk cliffs of the Sussex coast.

I am a writer, artist, performer and cultural activist of British Iranian heritage. A visual artist for 30 years, I mainly use writing, audio, and live practices to create poetic and gently provocative narratives that activate spaces, amplifying untold or overlooked stories. I am inaugural writer-in-residence at Seven Sisters Country Park and the Sussex Heritage Coast, working in close partnership with South Downs National Park Authority and I was project lead on *We See You Now* (2019-22), a decolonial landscape and literature project, majority funded by Arts Council England. Through creative writing and walking retreats produced by Writing Our Legacy, workshops and writer groups, we developed a creative cohort of 35+ writers of colour, predominantly women, inviting them to come into direct, collective experience of the coastal landscape, building a safe space for the development of new fiction, life writing and poetry. We drew inspiration from the landscape as companion in our reach for rest, joy, and reimaging through the intensity of the pandemic, Black Lives Matter and the crises we all face,

of climate and society. Since decolonising is a collective endeavour, my aim was a shift in perspective from the traditional, pastoral role of solo writer in the landscape, to one who also invites dialogue and fosters solidarity and connection with other creatives, offering resource, co-building networks and growing future legacy together.

Using the metaphors of the rapidly shifting chalkland – borders, edges and horizons – I offered creative writing prompts for work exploring biodiversity, geology and overlooked legacies of empire, interweaving our stories of migration with reflections on climate and cultural justice. Our work will be showcased as part of this year’s Brighton International Festival and plans are in development for a public programme throughout 2023, announced in May.

My residency podcast The Colour of Chalk, is an outdoor series with women writers and activists of colour, exploring how their relationship to nature has been shaped by their upbringing and cultural background, reflecting on climate, future and creativity. I wrote and presented for Radio 3’s The Essay Into the Wild strand. As well as completing my artist memoir, new poetry and commissioned writing from my residency, I am researching the botanist John Evelyn for a new commission for The Royal Society’s Places of Science at Lewes Castle. I am a Changing Chalk Associate Artist for Writing Our Legacy/The National Trust and an alumni of Julie’s Bicycle’s Climate, Culture, Action programme, Colour Green.



## I am working to make a space for myself, my family and the many others like us who may not always see – or feel like – ourselves in the spaces where we live.

I am a writer, educator and parent. Through life writing, narrative poetry, collaborative creative and anti-racist work and walking, I am working to make a space for myself, my family and the many others like us who may not always see – or feel like – ourselves in the spaces where we live. This personal and collective work is a way of making our selves visible to ourselves as well as to others, the better to root us in the landscape and help us all to grow.

My creative practice is research-based and draws on archival material, history, archaeology, botany and music, among other disciplines, to unearth the layers of meaning sometimes hidden – by ignorance, inattention or dominant narratives – in familiar places. My familiar places include the South Downs and the Seven Sisters coastal landscape. The memorials that sit within them, like the Chattri outside Brighton and the Commonwealth War Graves in Seaford, interest me for how they simultaneously remind us of the colonial project and the people whose lives were shaped by it, while also obscuring the personal histories of those very people and how they became involved. I explore their histories – imagined and reconstructed – to make them more visible.

I have written about the Chattri, a World War I memorial to Indian soldiers that sits on the South Downs. One Lesson, an extended reflection on a reworked Remembrance Day lesson and its impact on my sense of belonging in this landscape, was published in Writing Our Legacy's anthology Hidden Sussex and has been used by the Geography and Liberal Arts

departments at the University of Sussex. I was also commissioned to write a site responsive piece about the Chattri for Witness Stand, a Brighton Festival 2022 production. If you visit the Chattri, my poem In Balance, This Life can be heard through the geo locating app Echoes (search “Witness Stand Brighton” to find my work and the work of others).

I have also done extensive research, supported by Writing Our Legacy and South Downs National Park, into the presence of Caribbean soldiers on the Sussex coast at Seaford. Save for a blue plaque on the train station and nineteen graves in the local cemetery, the lives of these men is largely forgotten. Arts Council England are supporting my writing developing from this research.

In addition to this work I have run writing / walking workshops, supported by Brighton Dome, and contribute to local anti-racist education through Brighton and Hove's Anti-Racist Schools strategy. I see my writing and teaching as different sides of the ongoing, collective, anti-racist project.

Born in Sri Lanka, raised in New Mexico, now living in the UK, I have always written. The combined force of becoming a parent and living in Sussex has given me a visceral sense of how empire has played out in this landscape and in my ancestral and immediate family history. I write and teach from places that speak to me because the people who were once here feel present now.

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Hana  
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**There is no human wellbeing without planetary wellbeing. Walking is good for you and good for the planet. It's also an act of self-love. We should all walk more.**

Hana Sutch is co-founder and the CEO at Go Jauntly, a health and wellness company who created the award-winning walking, wayfinding and nature connection app. As a mixed heritage, British South Asian woman (2nd generation) her work is created via the experience of growing up in a southern English seaside city with limited access to greenspace.

Her connection to nature (and love of walking) developed later on in life and blossomed after her son was born. She felt it of utmost importance that despite living in London, he should grow up with a good connection with the rest of the natural world and enjoy its associated health and wellness benefits. Following this, the app was born out of a frustration of not being able to find nice places to go for a walk despite living in London which is actually 47% green space. Getting out into nature is often associated with “the great outdoors” which is inaccessible to many people of colour and inner city dwellers due to proximity, cost, and lack of direct access. Hana is committed to ensuring underserved communities can easily access the health and wellness benefits that walking, everyday nature connection and Active Travel brings.

Go Jauntly partners with a variety of organisations including Transport for London and a wide range of local authorities to increase walking for leisure, active travel, nature connectedness and to help reduce car-based carbon emissions. From scenic routes from A to B to specially curated walking tours and walking challenges. The app is designed to help people enjoy urban and accessible walks and connect with the rest of the natural world. Their Nature Notes feature helps people manage their health and wellbeing

by journaling the good things they see in everyday nature. For those suffering from severe mental health crises, it can bring clinically significant improvements in their mental wellbeing. To date, Go Jauntly has amassed over 480,000 downloads. New features designed to support the community's mental and physical health led to a 400% increase in females downloading the app.

Hana is a former student of Brunel University has over 18 years experience in the design and technology industry and also co-owns Furthermore, a digital product and service design consultancy. In the past she ran design studios and worked agency-side on projects for the likes of Google, Xbox and Nike. Hana is a service designer and operations lead by trade, she's also a climate activist and environmentalist.

Hana also hosts the 'Nature Bantz' podcast and is a strong believer in tech for good. She's a regular speaker most recently at Palta's Health Tech Meet Up, Tedx, Walking & Cycling All Party Parliamentary Group, National Academy for Social Prescribing. Hana was also recently featured in the [London & Partners founders stories](#) series.

In 2022, Go Jauntly was awarded bronze in the Sustainability, Environment and Climate - Innovation category in The Anthem Awards. In 2023, Go Jauntly was named a Top 100 Geospatial company. They are also the recipient of the highly prestigious Editor's Choice award from Apple with regular press features including: [Tech Crunch](#), [British Vogue](#), [Guardian](#), [Happiful](#) and [Hello Magazine](#).



**Our Dream Space has been stolen and we want it back. We will reclaim it via rest.**

**Tricia Hersey, Founder of The Nap Ministry**



*Photos credit: Jade Hylton*

THE REST EXPERIENCE started as an experimental residency from an Artist-In-House residency at Brighton Dome in 2021/22. I was deeply impacted by Black Lives Matter, the murder of George Floyd and the fall out of the pandemic. It was during lockdown that I heard the call by the founder and the emerging movement of the Nap Ministry of Nap Bishop Tricia Hersey. Her words ‘Rest is a portal’ were a life saver and showed me a way out of utter exhaustion and a troubled mind. As a writer, poet and spoken word artist I wanted to respond creatively and THE REST EXPERIENCE was born. This initiative represents the push back to the dominant grind culture and its relentless demand to churn out and produce. We are caught up in a system that rewards exploitation, over work, lack of sleep, becoming a product and monetising any and everything as a badge of honour. It is a violent process that reduces our humanity, steals our dreams and imagination and destroys the earth. THE REST EXPERIENCE is a refusal and resistance to this enslavement and believes that by creatively resting, in nature by claiming outdoor spaces, creating resting space at home, resting emotionally, economically and spiritually, we unravel ourselves back to the divine humans we are.

The initiative works in collaboration with artist and creative practitioners inviting participants to be sung to, to hear poetry, listen to story telling, lie down on a stage to music and sound, fall asleep, grief and cry, stretch, move and dance together. It is a collective community experience in spaces that not always welcome us, in the country side, in large established venues, in privileged spaces. We permit ourselves to not only dream and imagine the impossible, but become part of creating a fearless, free and loving world.

THE REST EXPERIENCE is developing the next phase. It aims to create intentional experiences to share and perform, include installations for touring in landscapes and unusual locations to creatively and collectively rest and lay down together. We are connecting to co-create an entirely different future and being-ness in the world. Unravel. Detangle to a human pace. Arrive back to your divine self. Daydream and rest to freedom, for yourself and for us. The REST EXPERIENCE is an ever evolving experience to download this new world. Lay down.

**You'll know then what to do.**

**Akila M  
Richards**  
(she/her)



[akilarichards.wordpress.com](https://akilarichards.wordpress.com)

# Dr Davina Quinlivan

(she/her)



<https://english.exeter.ac.uk/staff/dquinlivan/>



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**I was born in Hayes, Hillingdon, but now I live in rural Devon. I've lived in Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey and Exeter. It's important for me to find my own connection to green spaces and I write about legacies of place and identity, sound and memory.**

I am a daughter of generations of Colonials, complicated by the knowledge that the women in my family, my great-grandmothers, descend from ethnic minorities, indigenous tribes and diasporas from Burma and India, Portuguese Kerala and the Shan hills. Within this history is the fact that my grandfathers were powerful colonials, from France, Germany and England. So, naturally, I immediately likened my father to Almsay, as he lay dying and speaking in an accented voice, English and Exotic (they called him Yul Brenner in the hospital). Yet, it is rather me who has become this mercurial figure. I have, finally, reckoned with that here.

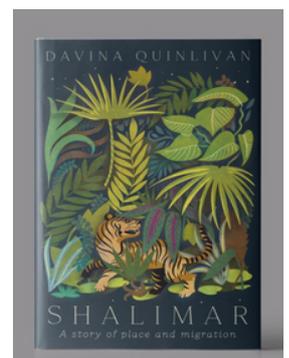
In my younger days, I sought kinship, of any kind, and wisdom through the writings of Hanif Kureishi, Bidisha, Arundhati Roy (I bought *The God of Small Things* with a school book token) and Zadie Smith (a few years older than me and also from West London), then, bell hooks, Jhumpa Lahiri, Edward Said. In my late twenties, my father died and through this loss came a deeper exploration, an archaeological unearthing, of 'home', of entangled life and maps, journeys and territories, notably as I wondered, gypsy-like, at odds with everything, as I navigated through Deep England.

I started writing this book in the winter of 2011. By this point, and prior to my final migration to Devon, with my young family, we had moved several times though Surrey and Berkshire, sporadically interrupted with visits to Suffolk, Norfolk and Kent, reading Roger Deakin and Celia Fiennes, Jini Lash's *Suffolk Song Cycle*, Ronald Blythe's *Arkenfield*, Derek Jarman and Sylvia Plath. In Surrey, I found myself in a

a forest for the first time in my life. In Hampshire, I encountered the rituals of rural life including wassailing and grand corridors of oak trees which sheltered me as I breast-fed our first child. In Devon, I met a shepherd and women whispering into the lichen on an old ash tree as we recovered from a disastrous move, a difficult time doubled back and tightened further by the global pandemic which spread in 2020. Through all these things, I learned about trees and moss, red soil and acorns trodden by ruby red herds of cows, things which in their own, small symphony of life, enabled a sense of futurity. This is how we make new maps.

[An extract from the book features in the Arts Council funded literary journal \*The Willowherb Review\*, edited by Jessica J. Lee, a peer-reviewed publication which brings together writers from under-represented communities. I'm currently writer in residence with Literature Works and teach in the Department of English and Creative Writing at The University of Exeter. I also teach with The New School of the Anthropocene as a founding member, along with Robert MacFarlane and Marina Warner. \*Shalimar\* was made into an audio book \[here\]\(#\).](#)

Click [here](#) to know more about Dr Davina Quinlivan's book '*Shalimar*'





**This International Women's Day, I celebrate the fact that I work in a team where the majority of people in senior leadership are women. However, as a South Asian woman, I'm acutely aware of the lack of diversity more broadly in the sector. To me, embracing equity looks like celebrating our achievements whilst acknowledging how far we have to go, and how challenging that journey is and will continue to be. In my role as Inclusion Senior Adviser at Natural England, my work involves supporting projects which aim to connect people to nature, with a focus on prioritizing places and people with the least access to high quality green space.**

Ami  
Udeshi  
(she/her)

Senior Adviser for Inclusion at Natural England

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In my first year in post, I have been inspired by the women of colour we have partnered with who have lent their expertise and shared their lived experience for my colleagues at Natural England to learn from. Women such as [Louisa Adjoa Parker](#) who ran an online workshop for us on 'Why Black Lives Matter in the British Countryside', and [Dr Geeta Ludhra](#) who led a walk in the Chilterns AONB in collaboration with us for South Asian History Month 2022 with her Community Interest Company - [Dadimas](#). I have seen first-hand how events such as these can encourage people to think differently, and how they can even be the starting point for much bigger, longer term projects. I look forward to seeing more partnerships such as these moving forward, they are a vital step forward in helping to remove some of the barriers to nature that some communities face.

For me, the importance of this work is connected to my personal experience. During my university years, I became an avid climber and still love to climb and hike today. I have been lucky in my life to meet people who introduced me to the outdoor world in a way I never had the chance to experience in my years growing up in North West London. Reflecting on that in recent times has really strengthened my ambition to create opportunities for people who wouldn't normally experience what the UK's natural landscape has to offer, which is the reality for many communities in this country.

Currently, I am working on a number of projects to support improved access for people to green spaces. One of these is in the London Borough of Croydon, where we are hoping to secure funding to build a Green Community Hub in the [South London Downs National Nature Reserve](#). The aim is help more people enjoy and learn about this beautiful green space on the outskirts of London. My role at Natural England has allowed me to connect with networks of inspiring women and people of colour working in the nature space, and this has been both humbling, and incredibly motivating. At times working in this space can be really hard, but there is an incredible sense of energy and togetherness as we all work together to help more people access and benefit from nature. I would love to hear from more people doing this work, so get in touch with me if that's you.

# Amy Zamarripa Solis

(she/her)

 @amyzsolis

 <https://linktr.ee/WritingOurLegacy>

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**It's fantastic that Writing Our Legacy is helping to connect BPOC writers, audiences and creatives to the natural heritage and landscape of the South Downs to inspire their creativity. We have learned so much through supporting artists such as Alinah Azadeh, who is doing incredible work in this area and who opened our eyes to the importance of the green and blue spaces on our doorsteps. Before this, I had never connected with the landscape in the UK — I grew up amongst the lakes, deserts and hill country of Texas, so the British countryside has been a foreign place where I, as a mixed race person from another country, didn't fit in. I now feel differently about my relationship to the landscape, and I feel so excited by our growing programme of art and nature creative activities, thanks to our long-term partnerships with South Downs National Park Authority and the Changing Chalk project, led by National Trust.**



Amy Zamarripa Solis is CEO and Founder of Writing Our Legacy CIC, a diverse led arts and heritage organisation that enables Black, Asian and ethnically diverse/BPOC\* people to tell their story through writing and the creative arts. She also works part-time for East London grantmaker and fundraiser Foundation for Future London.

Established in 2012, Writing Our Legacy CIC gives writers and other creatives a platform and community to feel supported, nurtured and evolve their work through the creative pipeline, from start to publication. The organisation shares stories and heritage of diaspora communities and brings them to life through various art forms for audiences to learn and take part in cultural heritage. In 2023 Writing Our Legacy will become a new Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation. Their yearly magazine *Covert* is now open for submissions on

the theme of ‘the natural heritage of the South Downs’ and will publish new poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction in the third edition in June 2023.

Amy has worked in communications, fundraising and management in arts, culture and creative sectors for over 25 years. She has worked for a wide range of charities, businesses and organisations, from tech start ups and grassroots community groups to national and international bodies including Arts Council England. Since 2016, she has run her own arts management and production company, This Too Is Real, supporting and developing art and cultural work that promotes social cohesion, equality and diversity.

Amy sits on the boards of Disability Arts Online and Milton Keynes Islamic Arts and Culture Organisation.

# Decolonialising Green Spaces:

Intercultural dialogues about climate conservation,  
sustainability, engagement and inclusion

Ebook Version: 8 March 2023

 #IWD2023WOCinnature

 <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/research/Groups/Interculturality-for-Diversity-and-Global-Learning>

