

Welcome to **G**, the new podcast from the Jesus College Intellectual Forum. I'm so excited for you to join me, Noah, as we unpack and explore the human-nature relationship.

In the previous episode, I met with Professor Marcus du Sautoy, who highlighted how maths can bridge the gap between being an observer and a participator in the natural world.

In this episode, I met with Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Uganda's first wildlife veterinarian and founder of Conservation Through Public Health, a grassroots NGO and non-profit that promotes holistic conservation, enabling people to coexist with gorillas and other wildlife, while also promoting the health of people and the livelihood of the local communities.

Unfortunately, my train had been delayed, and so I had to meet her online from Paddington Station. So apologies if at points you can hear background noise. But I really enjoyed our conversation, and I started by asking her about her early experiences of connection with animals.

: I grew up with very many pets at home. My elder brother was an animal lover as well and he used to bring home stray cats and dogs and they became my friends because my sister who I follow was over five years older than me so we're just outsi

But I set up a wildlife club in my last year of high school in Uganda, and that really got me engaged in conservation because we're able to take the students to Queen Elizabeth National Park. And that park was one of the first parks to be created. It used to have a lot of

like COVID-19 to the gorillas. And so when I was hired though, the first disease that the gorillas got from people was not a fatal flu from tourists. It was scabies, sarcoptic mange, which—where I did my training in the UK, people rarely got scabies because it's a developed country, but when I spoke to a human doctor friend of mine, they reported to me that the gorillas are losing hair and developing white scaly skin. I said to her, what is the most common skin disease in people? And she said it's scabies and I was like, woah. I'm like, how come?

She goes, yeah, because low-income groups of people have poor hygiene, they don't wash their clothes often and scabies is very common in WñBTf7JETQrETQq0.00000912 0 612 792 reWñBTf1 11.04

And because of this symbiotic relationship between the gorillas and the people, Ruhondeza, who was the head of the group, chose to settle in community land. So when the park called me and said, Ruhondeza is in the community land, come and see what you can do, maybe we need to translocate him, I went to check on him with my team at Conservation Through Public Health, and I saw that he was actually very well settled in community land. If we had moved him back, he would come out again because he doesn't want to be competing with other gorillas in the forest. And so we educated the communities to tolerate him taking an occasional banana plant because he had done so much to lift them out of poverty. And they did. They looked after him. They're the ones who even showed us where he was when we were looking for him outside the park. And they said, even when our elders get old, we look after them. And so when Ruhondeza died, everyone came to pay their last respects.

And I actually have a chapter of that in the book, *G* *MG*, which just simply showed how people were beginning to realize that gorillas are their future. You know, they really wanted to protect this gorilla because they had really changed their lives. So we're seeing people are more willing to tolerate and coexist with wildlife because they see them as their future.

I felt personally when I was reading, people paying their respects, there is that element of a transactional relationship between the gorillas and the community in the sense that the gorillas are bringing tourism. Also it seems like there was almost an emotional connection or a familial connection in that there's a slight sense of perhaps even solidarity and also fascination at these amazing creatures.

In one section of the book you talk about the translocation of an elephant and the whole community came out and were amazed at seeing this magnificent creature and helped move it for free. There's that element of tourism which is very important to local communities and bring

in the animal world. And he just kept going downhill in spite of treatment. And so sadly when Kanyonyi died in December 2017, it was a very sad day. I wrote a tribute on Facebook, we got over 300 shares, because people are just like, wow. And a lot of them were sharing also their experiences they had when they met Kanyonyi. So we named our first coffee brand after him, because

sustainably with a commitment to zero deforestation and the farmers are all getting a fair price for their coffee all along the way. And so it's really amazing. Glad to be part of that.

It's so inspiring how, if we think this all started with the focus on tourism, which as COVID illustrates is really effective, but isn't necessarily always a sustainable way of bringing money into local communities and empowering local communities. However, out of that has grown this wonderful thing. And this, it seems like it's really coming together and helping people around the world not only think about the food change that they're part of and what they're engaging in but thinking about conservation in a different way. And I think part of that is seeing the connection between personal and animal and the entire world's health.

How, if we think back to the young Gladys, if you don't mind me asking, how do you think your work and thoughts about conservation have changed?

I'll say that my conservation journey has enabled me to appreciate the role that communities play in conservation. When I started out as Uganda's first wildlife vet, I was only concerned about the animals because at that time no one really cared about animal welfare in conservation. And animal welfare in general, it's not given as much prestige as medical doctors. And like the UK where I did my vet training, I really thought we needed to get people to understand that wildlife is important and animal welfare is important in conservation.

But when I saw how people are making gorillas sick, and how poor and limited social services they had when we met them, it made me realize you can't protect the people without improving the health of their human neighbors. And that set me on a different journey.

We also have a Gorilla Health and Community Conservation Centre, with the support from

communities, understand how they're living and find ways to support them. And so we're looking into, as you mentioned earlier, responsible consumption, responsible tourism, buying coffee, honey, is this honey helping the communities? If the communities produce it, is it reducing their need to poach, collect firewood, destroy the habitat of the wildlife.

Because we realise that you can't only look after the wildlife, as the people who live there, you need everyone. It's a global asset for everyone. It's a global good, it's a global inheritance for all of us. That we should all be concerned about looking after wildlife.

One thing we also want to do is try and see how we can expand the park, because it's getting too small, and as the number of gorillas increase, the space isn't enough and there's more and more human wildlife conflict. And so we're working with the communities on this to see how willing they are to sell and how best to do it so that they continue to benefit from conservation. These are all the exciting things we're trying to work on.

And actually this year we're celebrating 20 years of the NGO Conservation Through Public Health. And going forward, we just want to continue to see what we can do, work with partners to scale up what we're doing.

And so just one final question there, you were talking about more global outreach. Obviously, you're in this really privileged space of close on human-gorilla interaction and human connection. However, when we think about responsible consumption, unfortunately, it is often not those places which are the cause of irresponsible consumption. How do you think the ideas of CTPH and the work you've done might be able

gorillas. So anybody, wherever they are, whether you're in the diaspora, whether you've never been to Africa before, you can still play your part to protect gorillas and other wildlife.

The pandemic has shown us that we're all connected. You know, disease can cause can cross any continent in just a couple of hours and all of us get affected. But it's almost become like a global village. We can all help each other. We can all have a part to play to protect the wildlife.

One other thing we're doing actually right now is engaging school children to get them to come up with their own projects. It's called STEAM or STEM. STEM with an A—Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, but with A which is Art. And we're getting them to come up with their own projects to protect the wildlife. So they're coming up with recycling projects, picking up rubbish around the park, they're coming up with clean energy cook stoves, they're coming up with ways of having livestock so that they don't have to enter the park to poach, or their families or their parents or grandparents don't have to enter the park to poach. And they're becoming very aware. So it's just getting them to be the leaders in their