

**Matt Bowles:** My guest today is Candice Young. She is a marine biologist, self-proclaimed global citizen, and the founder and executive director of [Trek Relief](#), a nonprofit organization that empowers adventure travelers to collaborate with global communities on meaningful service projects. [Trek Relief](#) has projects in four countries, Nepal, Mongolia, China, Chile, and Peru, which center community-led initiatives around climate resilience, ecological regeneration, economic autonomy, and education. Over the last seven years, [Trek Relief](#) has raised almost half a million dollars demolished and rebuilt a school out of rubble, outfitted rural medical centers with requested medical equipment, funded environmental cleanups in Mongolian national parks, provided emergency response in Nepal during the pandemic, and built greenhouses and community teaching gardens to support climate change resilience in rural communities. Originally from Los Angeles, Candice speaks four languages and has now traveled to over 50 countries.

Candice, welcome to the show.

**Candice Young:** Oh, thanks. I appreciate you and that intro. Thank you.

**Matt Bowles:** Let's talk a little bit about where we are doing this interview from today. Let's set the scene and the fact that we have agreed to make this a wine night.

So, let's also talk about what we are drinking. I am in Asheville, North Carolina today on the East Coast of the United States in the Blue Ridge Mountains. And I have just opened a bottle of Malbec from Mendoza, Argentina. So, I will be drinking through that during this episode. But where are you, Candice? And what are you drinking?

**Candice Young:** I am in Oxnard, California, close to Los Angeles. And I'm drinking a Chenin Blanc from California.

**Matt Bowles:** Love that. I love that you're coming to us from California and you're repping the California wines big up to the West Coast. As you know, I lived in Los Angeles for many years. It was the last base that I had before I became a full-time digital nomad, which has now been about 10 years of full-time travel without a base. But the last base that I had was in LA and I had a huge love for Southern California. I want to start off a little bit with your background, Candice, but before you even talk about your story, do you want to share a little bit about your cultural heritage and maybe talk a little bit about your parent's story?

**Candice Young:** Yeah, I am a Chinese descendant. So, my dad was born in Taiwan, and my mom was born in Malaysia, but my aunt and my grandparents were all from China. So, I am what they call an ABC, an American-born Chinese, born here in Los Angeles, but grew up with pretty non stereotypically chill Asian parents growing up. So that was really cool, especially when I would hear contrasting stories from my friends growing up about their tiger moms and all of that.

So, I feel very appreciative that my parents were very supportive and very chill, especially with everything I got up to after graduating college. I feel very grateful for them.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, LA is such an amazing city. It's such a beautiful and incredibly diverse city. People from all over the world. It's one of the things I love most about it. Can you share a little bit about your experience growing up in LA and navigating that American-born Chinese identity dynamic?

**Candice Young:** Yeah, that's a great question just because Los Angeles is so many different pockets of neighborhoods and ethnicities and experiences that you can have in Los Angeles and people even living in the same household can have a drastically different experience of Los Angeles.

Depending on what you're up to, your passions, who you connect with, and everything. But my little sliver of my LA experiences, I grew up in a place called La Cuna. I was 75 percent white, 25 percent Asian. Most of the Asians were Korean. And even in my high school, there were cliques, right? The natural cliques that happen.

And a lot of the Asian kids hung out together. All the athletes hung out together. Different groups of people. Most of the Asians hung out together and I was one of the Asian crew hanging out. And I would say going through high school and also college as well, that was a group that I gravitated towards as far as like my social circles.

And it wasn't until after I started traveling after graduating college, that's when I started to diversify my group of friends. And I guess I would say the last year in my college as well after I came back. Got into certain passions and hobbies.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I would love to talk a little bit about some of your initial travel experiences and how that evolution occurred. Can you share a little bit about how your interest in travel initially started to develop? And then I know you also studied abroad in Costa Rica. So, can you share a little bit about that experience too?

**Candice Young:** Yeah, that was my junior year spring of college, and I went to UC Davis, and I remember going from Los Angeles. Where I'd hang out with my friends at the mall every other weekend, and then go to Davis, where it's an agricultural school, and just being like, going from LA City Girls, being like, oh wait, now I'm in farmland, and I have to take a bus for like an hour to get to the nearest mall, and that was such a huge shift for me.

And I remember by junior year, I was like, okay, I'm done with this place, I need to get out of here, and go do something. So, I signed up for whatever study abroad experience I could sign up for the last week or whatever of submissions, and I just chose Costa Rica, because it was the one that fulfilled my major, like the deadlines were not, Closed or whatever.

So, I just, I kind of just jumped on that train and then it ended up being the most life changing trip that I've ever been on, just because number one, it was like a tropical biology program. I went from a biology major and then I went snorkeling for the first time in my life in Costa Rica. And at that point in my life, I already knew that I had a weird obsession with aquariums and fish.

And I would look up pictures of sharks in my free time and all that stuff and geek out over them. But it wasn't until I had my first snorkeling experience in Costa Rica that I was like, Oh, wow. This is amazing. This is beautiful. All right. Screw money. I'm just going to go for what I love. And I just want to like study marine biology.

I was pre-med at the time. I was like, screw money. It's okay. I love the ocean. And so then after that experience, one of the outcomes was I switched my major to, or like my emphasis to marine biology. And then another second random outcome, but that was hugely major was I picked up fire dancing when I was in Costa Rica.

And it was this Canadian woman who spinning poi outside of our Spanish class and poi are balls at the end of some chains or rope. And then you have one in each hand, and you do like synchronized movements. It's

kind of like some sort of prompt manipulation, but anyway, she was spinning them outside of Spanish class.

And my friend and I were like, "Oh, what are you doing?". And she's like, "Oh, I'm going to do a free fire show later tonight if you want to come back". And my friend and I were like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, let's come back". And so, I came back, and she was teaching everyone around. And then in the end, she let everyone try with fire that night.

And we were all just like on this grassy Hill underneath stars. And there was no music. It was just all of us taking turns and safety for each other and watching each other. And when it was my turn, it was just like, I didn't do any tricks. I just did circles, the same circle over and over again until the fire went out.

But basically, it was just so exhilarating to hear. You don't realize the sound that fire creates. Right. When there's wind going through it, it's just like this, but then the thing is, it's like, it's going all around you and you're controlling that sound. And that was just so mesmerizing. And I remember when the fire went out, my heart was beating so fast with all that adrenaline.

And I was beaten for like two hours after that. And I was hooked, and I was like, okay, all right, I'm going to get my own. So that was an expected outcome of my trip to Costa Rica was I got hooked on fire dancing and that became an obsession and a passion that just led me into different groups of friends.

I finally broke out of my Asian groups of friends and circles, and I started hanging out with bar dancers who at that time were more of like the death metal goth vibe. And maybe hippie burner vibe, but I just started to really expand the circles that I was around and yeah that kind of set me on a whole different path and to answer your questions about travel after college. That was something that actually was so wonderful that my mom suggested as a potential path for me because I graduated with this biology group degree emphasis in marine, just like many people who are 21, 22, when they graduate, they don't know exactly what they want to do yet with their degree.

And my mom was like, I wish that when I was younger, before I had kids, before I got locked into the job, I was able to travel more. And she's like, you should travel. And so, she suggested it, which was amazing as a parent. And my grandparents were going to China every year at the time to visit family and reconnect and tour around and all that stuff.

So, I tagged along on their trip, and it was my first time back to China. I had never gotten in touch with my Chinese heritage. I don't know a lot of my relatives who are there that are all my grandparents' relatives. So, they took me back and I spent a month and a half with them and they introduced me to so many relatives.

I got to meet a lot of people. I got, I went to a Kung Fu school, and I studied Kung Fu for a month in the mountains, like total Kill Bill style, and got inspired because I watched Kill Bill on the plane over there. Just like had like really crazy. Cool China experiences, but that was an open-ended trip. I was, I was planning to meet my friend from Costa Rica.

I studied abroad friend in Thailand and like later that on that trip and then it just turned into a, or it's supposed to be like a three-to-six-month trip turned into a 19 month trip.

**Matt Bowles:** Wow. So, it sounds like you were simultaneously reconnecting with your Chinese heritage and also expanding beyond the Chinese communities and the aging communities that you had initially been a part of.

Can you talk a little bit about how that journey went from there and as you pursued your passion for fire spinning and you went to Thailand, what were the next steps there?

**Candice Young:** Yeah, so fire opened up, it's such a random hobby to get into, but it also provided so many random amazing opportunities and experiences along the way too, because it's a very random party trick.

All of a sudden, like that, was one of the reasons why I wanted to go to Thailand was number one, they're known for diving, and number two, I knew that they had a very strong fire culture there, especially on the beaches and everything. So, when I went to Thailand, wherever we went, my best friend Teal, we always went with our backpacks or, you know, a little day pack and I had my poi in my backpack.

So, wherever we went, if there was like a bar or whatever and I saw someone spinning on the beach or there was a fire show later that night, I'd be like, "Oh my gosh, I play too". And I like to bring it out. And then we end up playing and then I spin fire and then the bar is like, Oh my gosh. And they're just throwing drinks at me and my friend to just stay and continue providing entertainment and all that stuff.

So, it was just a really fun way to travel and interact with the world around us. But eventually she and I decided to go to get our dive master license, which is basically pays a flat rate and you get unlimited diving. That's the way we pitched it. And so, we're like, let's go somewhere beautiful and do that.

And so, we ended up on Koh Phi Phi, Thailand, which is also known for all the fire dancing and parties and stuff like that. But basically, they had no idea. Great diving in Thailand. And so basically, we went there, and I ended up getting hired as a nightly performer at a bar and I was on a team with five tie guys and me, and we just had a nightly show and it was so sweet.

And that basically ended up, they gave me a place to stay. They gave me free drinks, they gave me a salary, I got tips and all that stuff. And ended up paying all of my diving bills too. So, it was super sweet, to take a passion that I'm so excited about, so obsessed with, and then have it. Support me and also pay for other passions. So that was a very milestone moment for me in my life.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I definitely want to talk about some of those other passions as well. Can you share a little bit more about your scuba diving journey and what scuba diving means to you?

**Candice Young:** Okay. So back up. That's right. So, I emphasize marine biology. So that was something I was just obsessed with. Obsessed with and weirdly obsessed with, like we called ourselves fish heads. Last year in college I just took a bunch of fish nutrition, fish ecology, fish evolution, a lot of different random fish facts that I've got, and then so, me wanting to pursue this dive master, it was for fun. Okay, that seems like a good deal.

That's going to enjoy the ocean and they even like hooked us on this thing, you could work off what you owe, right? With an internship. And so, we're like, okay, that sounds great. In the end, I ended up spending a lot of time doing this and also money to do this as a course. And by the end of it, I was broke, but I was also a professional diver by the end of it.

And I met somebody who ended up, we actually ended up dating. And then we ended up traveling and working together as a dive master, dive instructor duo. And so, we worked and lived together for like a year in the Philippines. For a season, Thailand for two seasons. So basically, racked up, I don't know, like 500 hours of underwater time guiding scuba dives.

At some point I was just like, okay, this is great and all, and this is really wonderful to take a passion and make a job out of it and travel being able to do that. But at some point, there is this thing when you dive regularly, especially as a professional. And this happened to me as I get cold easily.

When I first got into the ocean and was in the tropics, I could just go in my bikini. I was like, fine, whatever. But the more time you spend underwater, the easier it is, you get cold. And by the end of that time, like after 500 or so dives, I'd be in the water for 20 minutes with a long suit, 5-millimeter wetsuit.

I'd be shivering in 20 minutes. And there's just something about, and maybe I messed up. I didn't let myself condition. I just like, right when I became a pro, I like five mil wetsuit and I was diving the tropics with that. And, but also, I kind of tired myself out. It was a lot of physical labor to basically be a physical rollercoaster for two people at a time, potentially four dives a day.

That's a lot of stress on the body. So, at some point, I was kind of ready to put that diving down, but luckily, I was able to revive. That passion for the ocean and diving and other ways down the line.

**Matt Bowles:** You know, some of my greatest scuba diving memories are from Thailand. I don't have anywhere near as much experience as you do. And I didn't go nearly as far in the training, but I actually got my initial open water certification in Los Angeles before I started traveling full time. I think I got like a group on for a scuba session or something like that. And I got my initial open water cert so that I could do the dives. And then I was in Copenhagan in Thailand, and they had the PADI instructors there.

And I was able to do my advanced open water cert in Thailand, and it was in a place where they have whale sharks that are just there in the wild. And so, each time we would go out, the dive masters who were teaching us would basically say, okay, this is going to be our curriculum for the day. And this is the stuff we're going to do for today. Unless we see a whale shark. In which case all bets are off, and we swim with the whale shark. And sure enough, it was like my first or second time out with them in the advanced open water cert and a whale shark just rolled up and just swam around with us for like 10 minutes.

And we're all just like mesmerized to like to be in the presence of this incredible whale shark. So, I have had such lovely and wonderful experiences of diving in Thailand. And then I've been to other places as well. When I'm in a place that's like has really epic diving, the Galapagos islands or something, I was like, yeah, we're going to go scuba diving here.

So, I've kind of done it as a fun thing that I do periodically as I go to different places around the world. I usually need to refresh, you know, like, um, I haven't scuba dived in like five years. I got to remember how to do all this stuff, but I definitely want to dive here. So, I've always had great instructors who have been super incredible and supportive and fantastic to dive with.

So been super fortunate in that and got to see some really cool stuff around the world. And it's an amazing way to just see a massive part of the world that's not visible if you're above water and a really cool way to engage with that. But I want to get into some of your journey from there. And I know you actually eventually got into the commercial side of the fishing industry, and I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about that experience and then lessons and reflections from that experience and where that led you.

**Candice Young:** So, I ended up getting a job out in Alaska, working on fishing boats. And it was biology, an entry-level biology job. Basically, it was bathing the person that counts in the IDs and ways and gives samples and reports of what these commercial fishing vessels are taking out of the ocean. And there are

all sorts of regulations because Alaska is a billion of dollars industry to have fish come out of the water and feed McDonald's and customers.

And a lot of people who benefit from the Alaskan fisheries, but basically commercial vessels. Over a certain size are required to have data collectors like me, we're called fisheries observers to come on these boats and basically give data to the government nymphs, basically, which is, you know, what they manage the fisheries and also the captains of the boats too.

So, they know that's a good spot. They know what they're pulling out because of these boats. You know, I was on boats that were small that had only four people on it to even 200 people on it, and they were basically floating factories. So yeah, there is some very massive harvesting, and some people might even say raping of the oceans.

And I was definitely firsthand witness to it and not just a witness. I did the numbers of it, and I reported them. And so, it was a very real and very stark and very vivid experience on these fishing boats. And it did hurt. I'm coming from a marine biology conservation perspective, and that was what I came out for.

I got the job because I searched for conservation biology jobs. But I ended up there, and I didn't realize until the first day of my job that, oh, wow, I just entered into the food production industry. And, you know, it wasn't until I walked onto the first day of the job, you know, we had three weeks of training in Seattle, where they taught us all the fish ID, taught us all the sample techniques, all that stuff, and but it wasn't until the first day of the job, but I walk in with all the machines running.

We're at sea in Alaska and everyone's gotten protective head, you know, earmuffs on and all the rain coats are zipped up all the way to the chin. And there's steam everywhere, basically from all the water and the jets and the machine. There are so many machines that are just like variables everywhere.

And then I was like, did I just get myself into it, and yeah, I've touched millions and millions of dead fish at this point. Beginning of the conveyor belt underneath the deck for 12 hours a day, basically pulling off all the fish that were not the target species, and IDing, quantifying, weighing, and making those numbers.

So, I saw some stuff for sure. And it's kind of like all those documentaries you see on TV, kind of like the deadliest catch and all that stuff. And I was like, and you know, the documentary is about conspiracy and hear about the word by catch and all that stuff. Those are very real things and I've definitely experienced it firsthand, and I see so much wasted life coming from these nets that just non-selectively haul out from the ocean.

There were two kinds of boats that I was on. It was, one was a pelagic trawl a big net that just scoops non selectively through the water column. And there's a bottom trawler, which is basically the same kind of net, but with wheels on it and just rakes the ground. So, when you come up with all the catch, it's got like coral, it's got sea stars, it's got some king crab, which are now declining in numbers.

And the thing is that if they don't fit. In the machines that are on the boat that are specific to the kind of fish that we're fishing for, then it's just a waste. It just gets thrown overboard. It's just biomass that's just wasted. So, there are regulations that are put in place to reduce that loss, but it's just kind of like putting a band-aid over a wound.

It's not really addressing the core issue. So, yeah, if anyone wants to ask me specific questions and of that, I'm happy to share, because it's a very colorful experience. But at the same time, there are a lot of photos

and videos that I've designed to say, I mean, you can't post these, you can't release these because it would give buying fish of that rep.

And yeah, it's very sad. And like, even when you buy a McDonald's McFilet, you know what, on the box, it says from sustainable Alaskan fisheries. And I'm like, I mean, yeah, okay. The scientists are doing their best to do, to make it sustainable and to set those quotas and make sure those are things. But the reality is that you talk to all the captains who are on the boats and they're like, yeah, over the years, the average fish size has been diminishing.

It used to be one kilo of fish. Now it's like 600 grams of fish. There has been a lot of waste and things that went badly. And so, then there are now rules to mitigate that. But the reality is that worldwide, there are less and less fish and there's smaller fish overall. So that was also something interesting that I noticed, even in the diving industry, I only worked for a year, but I had experienced divers that I was guiding.

And they'd be like, where are all the turtles? Where are all the sharks? Where are all the, you know, and it's just like, it was a depressing industry to work in because I'm just like new. I'm excited. I'm like, yeah, it's great. And they're like, well, this is not as good as it used to be.

**Matt Bowles:** So, can you talk about the impact of all of this on the next steps that you took? And can you share a little bit as well about how you eventually connected with free diving and spearfishing and what that journey was like?

**Candice Young:** Okay, so I stopped my diving stint for a bit, then worked in Alaska doing like three-to-five-month contracts for three years. So didn't have too much time because it's really cold out there.

I tried to dive out there, but it never matched up with the schedules and the clubs that I found out there. So, I was kind of removed from the underwater world for a bit, and over the course of my travels over time, you know, I was traveling with some friends who wanted to get their scuba diving license, but I already had my certs.

So, while they did that, then I was like, you know, I'm going to be next door. I'm going to go take my free diving course or whatever your thing is. So somehow, I got my free diving course, my beginners and, and for people who don't know what that is, it's just basically the way I describe it. It's like advanced snorkeling for anyone who likes snorkeling, like this will just make your snorkeling experience a thousand times better just because they teach you monk level tips and tricks so that you can hold your breath longer. You can go deeper. You can have amazing buoyancy. It's just all these things that will just make you feel like a seal underwater. And I remember having my first course and just being, so mind blown by it because it was okay.

They teach you things that will make you push past your self-limiting beliefs of what you think you need to survive, right? You think you need to breathe and they're like, nope, that's only your halfway point. And they're like, oh, when a marathon runner, they run and then they get tired. They don't stop running.

They just keep going. Same thing when you want to breathe, you just keep going and I was like, "wow, you can do that". And so, like the things that the instructors would say was, "wow, you can do that". And so, I was very impressed by what they taught, and I was hooked. It was my reintroduction back to my relationship with the water.

With the free diving, you don't get cold as easily because you're going up and down, you're at the surface, you're not just staying still and like all that stuff. You're more active. And so, it was my way of having my relationship be reignited with the ocean and also as a kind of addicting, like self-competitive nature, right?

You're always looking for your personal best breath hold, personal best dive, like death, that kind of thing. And so, it added that element of challenge to it. So, I got hooked. I got my advanced cert later. And then at some point, someone mentioned, I haven't even heard of her. Her name, her name is Kimmy Warner, but she's an amazing fear fishing champion from Hawaii and won championships.

But eventually she became an advocate for the environment, highlighted by big names. But basically, listening to her podcast one year, I think it must've been like 2019 or something like that. I was like, Oh, wow. She has a really good point. She does this to have a relationship with the food that she makes.

She has. And that was something that's so foreign to me, you know, especially coming from Los Angeles. My first time in Alaska, I remember we were hiking around, and I saw a blueberry bush and I, the blueberry from the bush, and I was like, it was so mind blowing, I was like, food can be free. I was like, you don't have to pay for this.

That was definitely a mind-blowing moment. So, taking that to the next step was having a relationship with the meat that you eat, right? And like really recognizing the sacrifice of a life that comes to you when you're eating any kind of meat. Right. And so that was something that she described in her podcast.

Wow. That's really interesting. And for me, having had this background in scuba diving and now being passionate about free diving. And I was like, okay, that seems like the next evolution to aspire to. And it took two years for me to have this desire. But until I finally met somebody like a friend of a friend at a dinner party, that was like, I go spearfishing.

I was like, my God, can you take me? I've been wanting this forever. And, uh, he took me, and I was hooked. So hooked and I remember the first fish that I shot, which I was so surprised by barely got it was almost I had nicked it right underneath the like the dorsal fin. It was almost like walking a dog. It was Barely got it.

And then I was oh my gosh, and my friend was like you got it. You got a brain it. You got a brain and I just remember us treading water in the middle of the ocean and I had this wriggling fish in my hand and then I had to take my dive knife out for my belt, and I had been sever the spinal cord. And it was just such a difficult moment because the first few strokes are like gentle, you know, I'm sorry, I feel bad, but like, I just make it worse.

And then by at some point, I was like, okay, I'm making it worse. I need to just make a clean cut. And I just like went for it. And it went from wriggling trying to survive and get out of my hands to just being within my hands. And I was just like, wow, that was a really potent moment. And I was like, okay, I just took this precious, beautiful life.

I have to honor this in the best way I can. I need to cook this is delicious as possible and make sure you don't waste any of it. And that was something that was such a huge contrast from my experience on the commercial fishing boats, right? Where there's just so much waste. There's so many dead fish passing through.

You cut the whole fish and you just get the fillets. And there's so many other parts of the fish. It was the complete opposite experience, right? Of coming from commercial fishing boats to now being such a

selective kind of fishing, not just like, oh, I'm going to throw a rod and reel and I'm going to figure out what I get.

Once I see it, it's like, no, you have to be underwater. Hold your breath, perch, wait for the fish to come. When you see the fish, you have to choose it, not just choose it. You got to wait for the shot. So, it's like a very specific, I want this fish. I want to eat this fish. This is what's going to be on my plate kind of situation. So, I would say it's the most sustainable farm fishing.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to talk to you about some of the incredible world travels that you have done. I think I want to start with Nepal because I know it has a very special, significant, and important part in your travel journey.

Can you talk about your first experiences traveling through South Asia and experiencing Nepal for the very first time?

**Candice Young:** Yeah. The work on the fishing boats was really wonderful because of it. What's contract style work? It basically gave me a chunk of change savings. The Internet was not fast enough to spend the money on that, but it was both satellite internet.

And so, I get off the boats with a chunk of change. And I just remember I would have the travel bug by then from my first experience. And so, I just spent my paychecks on flights and hostels and I just took myself traveling through, went to India, went to Nepal for the first time, fell in love with the Himalayas and the trekking there.

I didn't even know what I was getting myself into. I just like, what are you doing in Nepal? Just like Annapurna Circuit without realizing that it was The Himalayas. And I remember being like, oh my God, this is so beautiful. I need to learn how to do self-support because it's all lodge trekking. You stay in warm beds every night.

There are hot meals prepared for you. Just walk from settlement to settlement that are like interspersed every one to two to three hours. And you just see the best views of your life. And it constantly changes every day. So, I was not even into hiking that much before. And then after that, I was like, oh my gosh, I need to learn how to do self-supported backpacking.

I needed to; it sent me onto this whole other passion. And so, yeah, so that was kind of this beautiful storm of travels in my early twenties where I was taking myself being the dirty backpacker and just doing the budget, you know, hostels everywhere. And I did that until about when I was 25, 26. So it was probably like five, six years.

And then at some point, well, this was a question that a friend posed to me in my travels and lingered is travel selfish, right? And I was like, initial response was like, no, it's not selfish because you're spreading the American economy around and, you know, they could use the business here and everything.

But somehow that answer still didn't like to settle for me. I think there's still more to this. So that link, that question lingered no matter for years. And it wasn't until at some point, you know, I was also getting to this point where I was feeling really bad, but I was starting to feel jaded on the travel.

And I was in my early twenties, you know, mid-twenties, and I was traveling the world, and I was able to do things. And I would be encountering older men, 50, 60-year-old men in India, cleaning shoes for a living.

And they're just working as much as they can to support the families. And I'm just like a young 20 something year old, just traveling around and having fun and whatever.

And so, I was like, wow, I feel so. So lucky for just being born in a place that has a passport with a stronger economy. And so, it just made me feel very privileged, very lucky to be able to travel at that age as much as I was. But at the same time, I was like, what is the point of all this? Okay. I can say it's developing me as a person.

I am becoming more globally cultured, have more perspectives, and all that stuff. And I think you can, you do develop yourself at some point, but at some point, when you've traveled enough, you're like, okay, but what is the point of all this? And so, I was ready to put my traveler's hat down at some point because also the fishing boat jobs were getting a little old for me too.

I was ready to like to have a regular life and not be on boats well nowhere forever. So, then I started to apply for land jobs, but there was still one more kind of travel that I wanted to try which I wanted to get into disaster relief. I wanted to volunteer for some sort of disaster relief organization that seemed really exciting to me.

And so, I was applying for that as well. And so, they ended up getting back to me first before other jobs did. And so, I ended up back in Nepal in 2016, nine months after their big 2015 earthquake. And I gave them three months of my time and I just signed up as a volunteer. It's like, you know, it was awesome.

It's called an organization called [All Hands Now, All Hands and Hearts](#). And they accept volunteers of all, you know, general skill levels, specific skills, whatever. But in the end, within 10 days, I ended up getting hired as their project coordinator. They found out that I was staying for a while, and I was ready and willing to help out with whatever.

So that was really interesting. It got my foot in the door with understanding how nonprofits work in Nepal, construction logistics in Nepal. We were running a base of 100 volunteers with two, like a satellite camp and rebuilding 50 toilets. So that was a very interesting way to experience Nepal, especially post disaster when there's brownouts scheduled every day, there's only like four hours of power every day and like January.

So super cold and the roads where we were at, were not paved. So, where we were staying, there's just any time of a car. Or truck blows by, then it's just dust everywhere, all of your bed, everywhere. And also, there's no hot showers either, cause there's only three or four hours of power every day. So, and people coming back from the volunteer sites, dusty, they've been shoveling and rubbing all day and moving rocks and cement or whatever they've been up to.

So yeah, that was, I would say the genesis story of me getting involved in Nepal more deeply.

**Matt Bowles:** Can you talk a little bit about the impact of that experience and where that led you and maybe share the origin story of the founding of Trek Relief.

**Candice Young:** So, I so appreciate my experience with [All Hands and Hearts](#) because it was for me a kind of like my way out of this golden handcuff job of the fishing boats.

Not that it was necessarily like a pay increase because I went from marine biology to the nonprofit world, but it was more of I rediscovered a side of myself, which is I like to organize things. And I hadn't organized

anything except for my own travel plans since college. Like uh, high school I was like key club president, which is a community service organization.

In college, I was also president of my dorms. So, I had held leadership positions in the past, but I hadn't used them at all for most of my twenties until that point. And then I was like, oh wait, I forgot that I like to organize things. And so that was a really nice exercise of my re-ignition of my leadership, I would say.

And so, it's really wonderful to even get the behind-the-scenes of what it takes to run. And they're a 10-year operating US-based nonprofit. Like they've got their stuff together, very nice systems, well organized, got all the funding and also the systems in place. So, it was really nice to be able to see that as an example.

And when that project finished, then I had, you know, worked three months with them and then I had two more months set aside to go trekking in the Himalayas because I loved it by then. And the place that I started with was right next to the epicenter in the Himalayas. And I was curious about that place because it was a premier trekking destination, but everyone who had said during that time that it was closed, you couldn't go there.

There was just too much destruction and all that stuff. But I was like, oh, okay, I guess you can't go. But one day when I was working at the base, I saw two people coming with their big backpacks coming from that direction. I was like, hey, where'd you guys come from? And they're like, oh, we just came from Langtang.

And I was like, I thought that was closed. You can't go. And they're like, I mean, you could go, but you just have to ask ahead because a lot of settlements are destroyed. And maybe you have to walk like an extra hour or two to find a place. But it's possible. And then, so then I was like, okay, it's on, let's go.

And then, so I grabbed a friend and then we ended up going there after the project finished. And then that's when I saw so much destruction, like even more destruction than I had seen in the past three months working in the epicenter of the earth, because that's where a lot of aid was also, there were roads.

There's a higher density population. But once I got to the Himalayas, you had to walk, like taking a 10-hour bus to get there. And they had to walk into the settlement. So, it's just not as densely populated. So they just weren't getting that much aid, but when I got there, it looked like a bomb had gotten off, got off, and it was like, you could see menus from tea houses that were buried underneath the rocks, and you could see broken toilets just sitting out in a field of rubble, and there were people who were coming up to my friend and I and please, stay here in the night, like share the business, make it fair.

And it was just so hard to say no to these people. And there's not many people around, you know? And so, my friend and I changed our itinerary two times just to help people out along the way and eat there, stay with them the night. And I was just so moved. I had never seen anything in all my travels at that.

That was so devastating. And that's after three months of working post-destruction in Nepal. Anyway, that experience haunted me for the next one and a half months trekking through the Himalayas. And when you're walking through the Himalayas, there are just so many beautiful views. You get kind of elevated thinking because you're not just in your normal everyday life, thinking about your normal things.

It's almost like you don't have these things that are distracting you, kind of reflecting on experiences. And you've got the endorphins moving too with your movement. And my mind kept on wandering back to what I had seen for a long time. And so, through this [AllHands and Hearts](#) experience, they had asked all the volunteers to fundraise to cover, help cover the cost of their stay there.

And so, I had my first experience fundraising through them and, you know, raised 2,000 for them, got a sweater. It was awesome. But that was my first time ever fundraising. And then, so then I was like, you know what? I bet I could do a fundraiser for this village. So, you know, I was, it's kind of a scary thought because it was work and all that stuff.

But the fact that my mind kept on wandering there, I kept on asking myself, like, what is the point of my five months in Nepal? All the connections I made, my passion for trekking, what is this? Anyway, the only person I talked to about this potential idea of fundraising for them was my trekking partner, Keri, a good friend of mine from the boats.

And she was like, "Hey, I think there's someone from the lodge that we met at dinner tonight. That maybe he'd be helpful". So, then we were walking the same direction the next day and I was like, hey, and I kind of just pitched the idea to him. He goes, "Oh, by the way, I think that's a great idea. And by the way, I'm a professor and I teach crowdfunding and entrepreneurship".

So yeah, I have some ideas for you. And so, we ended up walking in the same direction for seven days. And it was just such a, like so many ideas flying and all that stuff. We came up with the name Trek Relief together. And originally, I was thinking maybe I'll raise like. And this is a big goal. Like, I was like, maybe I'll raise like 10,000 for this village.

And then he's like, no, I think you should go higher. And I was like, what? The next day I came back, and it was 50,000. Yeah, that sounds like a good number. I was like, whoa, that's a lot of commitment. But like everything he was telling me, he just basically was like, you do this, you tag your donors, you make posts, you all these things.

And I was like, okay, I think actually everything you're telling me, it's given me all the tools. And he was actually traveling with three of his film students. And they helped me write and film a campaign video right on the spot. And so, I was just like, okay, after seven weeks of walking together with them and brainstorming all these ideas.

And then I had a month in Singapore where I had like time and space to work on this. But I was like, okay, I have, All the tools and resources available for me to make this happen. And I remember I spent that month creating the campaign, just basically doing everything he told me to do to a T. And I remember that scary moment before I hit the launch button of my first campaign.

I was like, oh shit, I'm going to put myself out there to the world and ask for a bunch of money. Like this is really scary, but I also just spent a lot of time, and I already said all the things I've made the connections I've reached out to potential beneficiaries I've reached out to all that stuff. And so, then I was like, okay.

Let's do this. And I like launching it. And now we're seven years later, we're a non-profit. Having fundraising and raised like at this point close to half a million dollars for different kinds of projects. So, I did not expect that to happen. That was quite a scary leap.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, one of the things that has really stood out to me about Trek Relief is the extent to which you have been very intentional about empowering local communities to lead and direct these initiatives as you've built Trek Relief.

Can you share a little bit about that, first of all, and why and how you've been so intentional about that? And then also talk a little bit about, up to this point, the things that Trek Relief has done in Nepal.

**Candice Young:** Yeah, so like I mentioned, their original idea behind Trek Relief was just to do a personal fundraising campaign to support this village that obviously needed help.

They were destroyed. A lot of people lost their mothers, their fathers, their kids. And just moving through the village, there were just broken homes. There's just a whole field of gigantic boulders. And it looked like these boulders, almost like they were frozen waves. And that's just the way that the avalanche and the landslide happened.

But like 20 meters below what we walked; it took like 30 minutes to walk over. This was a four-story building. It was just so sad. And the stories that we heard along the way. So, I remember having a really wonderful conversation with one of the lodge owners because we ordered food with him, and he had great English and was a great storyteller.

But I remember asking him, I was like, Hey, what's up with all these helicopters, right? And they're transporting goods into this. And then they're carrying rebar and everything. He knew all the facts. He was like, Oh yeah, that's like that much. And I cost this much. And I was like this and this. And then, so I was like, just like, oh, okay.

He probably knows what's going on. So anyway, when I decided to do this fundraiser, I started looking up, how do we donate this money? And I saw his face on a bunch of YouTube videos. And it turns out that this guy had a conversation with, had a meal with, he was a secretary of the Long Tongue Management and Reconstruction Committee, which is basically a Group of 26 individuals, leaders from this valley that were elected to help manage the coordinate the efforts.

And it was actually a lot from him too because he's had experience working with international nonprofits before. So, he had experience with organization and funding and how to respond to donors and everything. So, everything they had put on with the videos, responsiveness, updates, everything was just very, very like, that's something that I would want to fund, help out with.

So, from the beginning, Trek Relief has been somebody who supports what's already happening there. And it's been really wonderful to support local communities and what they're asking for, which is funding to help with what's going on. So initially it was disaster relief efforts. And then it was another one we did.

It was a medical support project where we had a doctor, the whole medical thing was wonderful because we had some volunteers who came on one of our trips. Like we are nurses. We would love to do this. And use our profession as the way to help as well. And so, I was like, okay, well, I know that they wanted to go to Everest as well.

And I knew that there was a way that we could combine some sort of fundraising with Everest and the medical profession. So, I ended up scouting this whole lower Everest region because Everest does not need money, but the lower Everest region could use the money. And so, I went to the district hospital. Talk to the doctors there.

And then one of them was, oh, can I show you my hospital or my medical clinic? Cause the roof just blew off a few days ago. There's a huge storm. So, he took me by jeep seven hours away to this place called Salyon. And then he showed me all the tin roof had come off. Everything was soaked with water, muddy, and all of his equipment's destroyed.

He's like, I have to figure out how to get all this equipment. Now, and so I was like, okay, well, I actually have people who want to come, and they are medical professionals, and they would love to help. And we could probably bring some funding in too. And so, then we came up together and we worked together with our nurses, and they were involved as well, but we came up with a list of all the equipment that he would like to have supported.

So that was like another reason or another way that we created projects. It's just like working together with what was the need, what was they ask. And a lot of times it's like, what is the way that we, as coming from the Western society, like how do we contribute and support, right? And I think there are some ideas and stuff like that that are great, but maybe they aren't always going to be the right fit for what's going on.

We don't know the culture. We don't know what is normal and we don't want to be imposing ourselves. But, but one of the greatest assets that we do come with is funding and resources. So that is a very welcome way to be bringing and supporting a community and what they're asking for.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I want to ask you about your decision to expand Trek Relief outside of Nepal. And I think the first place that I want to ask you about is Mongolia because I went to Mongolia for the first time in 2019 and I was blown away. I've been talking about it ever since. It is one of the most beautiful countries on the planet for sure that I've ever been to, the people are amazing.

And I was just so enamored with Mongolia. And so I'm wondering if you can share a little bit about your decision to expand Trek Relief and then what you're up to in Mongolia and why you selected that country.

**Candice Young:** So, Mongolia was our next country after Nepal. And it actually originally came because for me, my thought process with this initial fundraiser for a long time, I had set aside a year for me to raise this 50,000 goal, which we ended up reaching in eight months.

And we raised this by, I was offering to arrange guided and imported treks into the valley so people could see what the whole point of this was. I helped them create fundraising pages if they wanted to help fundraise for this whole situation. And also, there was a volunteer aspect where they connected them with the long-term management and construction committee.

So, they were helping with the whole rebuild efforts as well. So, we realized, oh my gosh, we did it. We raised 50,000 and it was a lot of work, but at the same time, it made so much sense. And it also was like, I had never felt myself so driven or so passionate about doing something. I think that people who go down the altruistic or nonprofit route, they can probably relate of having so much drive for something that's non-financial.

It's something that's greater than herself. And at some point, I was like, you know what, I could see this model being applied to any cause anywhere, right? Just tie an active adventure to an amazing cause, and especially helping people with fundraising pages and basically peer to peer fundraising. There's a really amazing way that we can help support projects around the world while tying travel to it.

So, in that thought process, Then I was like, okay, well, what's the best way to raise money? And I had a call with my mentor, the professor who has been with me since the beginning. And we talked about it. I was like, would it make sense to make a nonprofit out of it? And his wife is actually the CEO for 1 percent of the planet.

So, he has quite an experience seeing the behind the scenes of one of nonprofits and has got great advice always. And he was like, you know what, I think that would be the way to go. And so, then we took the model and the whole idea, my whole vision for this is that anyone who comes on our trips. They don't have to go on the trip, but just to see the model that you can tie adventure with fundraising.

And especially when you get to see what the situation is for, and someone from our board, because we had to make the board to make a nonprofit, she had gone to Mongolia before and she suggested like, oh, maybe that could be another place that we could bring this to. Because there's a lot of potential for help there and also a really great adventure out there.

So that's how we ended up going to Mongolia just by a suggestion from a board member. I spent a month out there scouting, talking to everybody, going on trips, and also talking to all the locals that we visit, the yurts that we stay at. Scouting is my favorite way of traveling, especially having Trek Relief as something that I can offer.

Like, hey, without getting anyone's hopes up, it's just like, "Hey, what are problems that people face here?" What was that the communities face? And it is so much nicer to connect to someone that way than asking, what is the Wi-Fi password, where is the bus stop? Where should I eat? And that's a much more meaningful and deep way to engage with locals in the community.

And it was really deep and beautiful to be able to connect with people that way. And eventually along the different questions and the people that I asked, then we ended up landing. A lot of the directions were pointing towards the major trash problem in Mongolia. It's a very culturally nomadic culture.

And so, they move their yards seasonally based on the grazing and the herds and all that stuff. stuff. And they've mostly dealt with biodegradable things, but only recently they've had to deal with things that are not biodegradable, but they also don't have the culture to dispose of it or the infrastructure, I should say as well.

And so, then we got involved with working with the national park to start installing the first trash cans and bringing out kids from the Ulaanbaatar, the capital, to do educational cleanup days around the park. And really just start to bring in that seed money to do what people want, but there just isn't that infrastructure, that input in to make that happen.

And so, when you see that, I don't know, for someone who wanted to go into conservation and everything, I'm just, Oh, okay. I see this and the young people have this desire, but the infrastructure has not caught up yet. And how can we show love and support to make this happen? And so that's where Trek Life came in.

We were bringing in travelers and people who would help fundraise to make this happen. And we partnered with a local Rotary club that was going in this direction. And so together we put together these cleanup events that are educational and developed by the infrastructure.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask you about your decision to expand Trek Relief again outside of Asia this time to go into South America. Can you talk about what Trek Relief is up to in Chilean Patagonia?

**Candice Young:** So that is honestly for me the, a huge milestone for Trek Relief because One of the people who came on our trips, actually, she came on the very first trip. Her name is Sarah. And she was so moved by what we did that she ended up coming back as a trip leader for Nepal and brought some friends.

And then she came back and became a trip leader for Mongolia as well. And in the end, she saw the potential for it. And she was also a nomadic traveler at the time, and she was in Patagonia and realized Oh, wait, she's part of the Trek Relief board as well. So, leading trips, keeping eyes and ears up open, but she like fell in love with Patagonia as well.

And she knew that there was potential for Trek Relief out there. So, in the end, she encountered some people. She was on a scouting trip with our mentor. His name is Rob. And then one of Rob's students ended up meeting someone while camping out in Patagonia national park. And he is an environmental lawyer from Santiago. And he had been basically brainstorming ways to help improve the environmental situation in Patagonia.

In the end, they ended up sharing a meal together and time together in the lodge. And he was sharing with him his dreams and his visions for that. And then they were just so, just like soaking it all up.

Like, "oh my God, this is great". And then, in the end, someone like Sarah, tell them what we're up to. And then she's like, okay, we're from Trek Relief. We want to support locals like you to be able to make things happen, especially projects that are meaningful, especially Sarah's wonderful. She's been environmentally aligned her whole life. And so that was something that was really dear to her. And so that's how that started. It was something that for me, I am so happy for it. I'm so grateful for it. Cause I was hoping for in creating Trek Relief as a nonprofit was to hopefully have a butterfly effect.

The people who come traveling can see that this model can be replicated, and they also take the model and they create the projects themselves. So that's how the Patagonia project started with Sarah.

**Matt Bowles:** And you're expanding into Peru. Can you talk about what is going on in Peru?

**Candice Young:** Yeah, so that is our newest and latest project. Our initial trip is scheduled to launch April, 2024. And that also is a huge milestone as well for me personally and Trek Relief, just because just seeing that people are excited about creating programs and seeing the potential of what Trek Relief can do to bring change while also combining travel with it.

And this was started by a friend of mine named Harmony. We met through a friend of a friend at a music festival, LIB of all places. And she already had this idea that she wanted to do something aligned with helping out with the community, doing something in Peru, she already had a nonprofit or some idea in mind already.

And so, a friend connected us. Cause he was like; you need to meet Candice because she's been doing this in Nepal and all that. And so, I was like, you know what? I would love it. To see you do this, that's awesome. I feel like we have very parallel journeys in this. And if you ever want to come on a trip with Trek Relief, you can see how we do it and all of that.

And so eventually she came on our Patagonia trip with Sarah, and she saw how we run things. And then she's like, all right, let's do it. I understand that she's helped us out back end with some of our marketing and stuff. So, we've worked together, the systems in the back and everything. It's been really wonderful to have her on the team.

And now she wants to move forward with that. So, it's very touching. And I'm just so like sparkly from seeing that this butterfly effect is happening and it's possible.

**Matt Bowles:** Well, one of the things that has been so inspiring to me about Trek Relief is how deeply you have thought about a lot of the different dynamics and aspects of it. And I want to ask you if you can share a little bit about Trek Relief's, what you call it. Conscious travel protocols, including the three guiding principles of sustainable tourism and what that looks like on your trips.

**Candice Young:** Yeah. Thanks for asking because it's one of those things when you travel at some point, you can feel bad about buying water, plastic bottles, all the time to get your water, there are things.

That over time, you're like, oh man, I'm creating a lot of waste and maybe this is not the most sustainable way to be moving through this earth, right. And Sarah helped develop this out too. Cause she's been very environmentally minded through her whole life and all the actions she's chosen that I really look up to her for so many things, but our Patagonia program that she's been involved with, there's this one element and itinerary where we stay at this permaculture farm, which is actually where she's been living for the past three years.

And I visited her for a month in 2021 and just stayed with her. And I was just so blown away by just the way that they live life out there. It's a completely organic permaculture regenerative farm where there's zero waste, to the point where it's negative waste in some ways all bio building and just living there and seeing how they process and they invite campers to come through here and stay on their property and they have a whole trash system where even if you were to buy, bring cookies or chips or whatever then you wash the trash you hang it to dry when it's dry then you put it in these they have a collected all similar sized plastic bottles and you put your clean trash into these plastic bottles and these bottles will all be used for installation for building later.

And yes, it is more work, but at the same time, it is beautiful what they're doing and living there for a month and just being part of their support crew and helping clean up around the place. I was just like, wow, this has completely set the standard for me in a whole new way. Cause you know how you're going through different experiences and you're like, "Oh, wow, that's a new standard".

Like they were the standard for me for zero waste. And she's been living this for three years now on the property. And even just going grocery shopping with her was a trip because she's like, oh, I buy this. I didn't buy that. And like, this one has packaging. This does not have a gene.

Like, are we going to bring this? It's just very mindful about how she makes her choices. And I love that there are friends that really set examples for you in life. And she's wonderful about that. So, it was really nice to just feel everyone's different input that helps develop about the culture of Trek Relief.

And I've really supported it because for me, yeah, I support conservation and all that stuff, but it's to be constantly shown new levels of how to be right. And so, then we've started to adopt that into our trips as a standard across the board. Okay, how do we minimize environmental impact, right? How do we really make sure that we are supporting local communities by decreasing the amount of gas and all that stuff that is used to transport these things? How do we actually really respect what's actually happening around here? So, it's really taking the time to, because I feel like we want it, right? But it's just, we take the time to think through how to make this happen.

And so, we have that outlined in our website and we try to develop that out as our culture for Trek Relief for people who come on our trips, and they have that standard or those examples to live by. And it's one of those things where you can hang out with your friends. You can have dinner with them. You can do that.

But you're not going to quite fully absorb their habits or their way of being until you're on a trip with someone. And when you're on a trip with someone, you really pick up their habits. You really pick up how they do things and what choices they make. Being on a trip with anyone is the perfect way to be able to absorb wonderful qualities from other people. And so it's really nice to be able to share these values

**Matt Bowles:** Well, I also want to ask about the connection with local communities and places, because one of the things that I've been reflecting on, Candice, as a digital nomad, as I travel around the world, and I observe the remote work trend taking off and the digital nomad movement taking off.

One of the things that I've been reflecting on is how a lot of the infrastructure that seems to be developing to service the increased demand of digital nomads is oftentimes pretty oriented towards segregating the travelers from the local communities, unless they're being waited on by somebody, for example.

Can you share a little bit about how Trek Relief has designed these travel experiences to intentionally have a deeper and more substantive connection with the local communities.

**Candice Young:** Yeah, I can imagine what you're talking about with, you're talking about like digital nomad, like services and communities, and those are wonderful for their own aspect. You can literally connect with other travelers.

But a lot of times they are organized by people who are not even from that place, right? And there are ways for people to connect, travelers to connect, right? But for me, that's not so much the interest. For me, the interest is more in what is the point of all this?

And so, the whole point for me is that I find an organization or I find a cause or I find something that is, hey, you know what? That's for me. I would dedicate my time and energy into supporting what's going on here. And a specific, I'll speak to Nepal because that's my project. That's my space. Since we've been operating there since 2016.

So, seven years now, we've helped out long term management. Reconstruction committee. We helped out Sally on in the hospital, primary health care center there. We've rebuilt a school. And then now we're partnered with this wonderful, wonderful nonprofit organization called. The small world, they're Nepalese and I've met the founders.

We supported them during the pandemic when we couldn't travel there. And they were doing COVID relief work at that time. And I remember being, just watching Nepal from a distance and also getting messages from friends in Nepal being, Oh my gosh, how's it in America right now? Oh my gosh, how's it in Nepal right now?

It was just such a weird place to have a foot in both doors and just experience what it was like to experience a pandemic, you know, from these two different worlds. And there were moments when Nepal got hit, got slammed because India had that huge wave spilled over to Nepal and the funeral pyres were not enough to keep up with the people who were dying.

And so, at that point, I was really feeling torn. I wanted to help out, especially because America at the time was getting the vaccines. Everyone's just like, let's go to the party. We're vaccinated and all that stuff. But then Nepal was, we wish we had vaccines and people were here. I don't want the vaccine. It was just like; it was just such a weird place to be in both worlds.

And so, I started researching like, okay, who's actually doing something about the pandemic in Nepal and found this organization. And they were super responsive, super on top of the things, updated all the time. And so, I just gave them some people from 2020 who had trip credit with us that got canceled.

They donated it back to our pool. And I was like, okay, I'm going to find a non-profit Is doing work there. So, I donated their trip credit to them based on our donor's wishes because that was our initial contact. And then in the end, then we ended up doing a big fundraiser for them. cause they were doing a lot of work.

And so, I was like, you know, I want to do something for Nepal. They're doing something awesome. Let's do something. And so, I hosted a large Facebook fundraising campaign. Okay, so, I'll share something. I did a matching campaign during the pandemic. I took my unemployment funds, and I used it because I was like, it's not fair that our government is paying our people.

And we're having fun with this money when Nepal can't even take care of their people and give them vaccines and everything. And there was just, so I took the money that I got from four months of unemployment, and I used it as a matching campaign and we raised 26,700 and we sent it to this nonprofit in Nepal that was doing this.

And so that was the biggest campaign I've ever had, I've never done anything like that before. It was very scary. This makes sense to me, my head. It's very scary. And I don't know what my parents or my board are going to think about this, but I feel like it's the right thing to do. I'm just going to go with this.

And I had to ask a few friends. I'm like, is this weird? Is this, okay? It's up to you. And I'm like, oh, it feels right. And so went for it. And that's how we ended up developing this relationship with this nonprofit. And when I came back finally, after being away for a year and a half in Nepal, opened up his borders because they were desperate for tourists.

Then we came back in November 2021. And then I was like, okay, I want to meet these. One person we had already video-chatted with the CEO and all that stuff, they're wonderful. And so, I was like, okay, let's do a one-day volunteer thing with them just to see what they're up to and just spending time with them and the work they're up to.

I was like, okay, these guys are cool. So, then the next year I was already on a four-cruiser road. So, I was like, okay, the school's finished. You know, what is the point of us staying in Nepal? My original intention was to do disaster relief, but now that village is being rebuilt five years later. So, do I just continue with this momentum or are we done or what's the point?

And then that year I ended up having the opportunity to go to the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow. And I was there, and I went to specifically some talks where there were Nepalese panelists and it was very moving what I saw there because they put on the big screen, a video, seven-minute video of a place that I worked and lived at for three months with [All Hands](#).

And earlier that year, they had a huge flood come through and it was wiping out all this, these buildings and all that stuff, places that I saw on the big screen at the UN presented, where I used to buy donuts. And I had known about this flood because my friends from the area, they reached out to me like, oh my gosh, so many videos, like, look what's happening.

I didn't think too much about it at that time, but to see it on the UN and to hear the Nepalese pianists be like, hey, it's not fair that all the countries that are creating the most climate change also have the

governments and infrastructure to take care of their people. But what about all the developing nations who were also going to feel those effects, but we don't have those things.

So, what we're asking from the UN and countries and nonprofits is for technical and financial assistance in these coming years of climate change. And then just seeing that video on the big screen and feeling that, because I know those places, those are the buildings that I was talking about. So, I went up to the panelists afterwards.

Thank you for the presentation. My name is Candice. I've been fundraising in Nepal since 2016 and I love what you're doing. I would love to support in whatever way. And so, we met in Nepal. I was there two weeks later, and we met two times and then they helped me find this project that we're now supporting for the second year this year.

It's called Seeds of Hope. So, it's basically helping develop and distribute greenhouse supplies in the lower Everest region. So, it's just been a beautiful flow of events of how things, I would never be able to predict what the next step is, but whatever's presented, it's just about, okay, does this make sense?

**Matt Bowles:** So, for listeners at this point who are interested in [Trek Relief](#), in getting involved, in participating in a Trek Relief experience, can you share a little bit about, first of all, what the options are for supporting [Trek Relief](#), and then for participants that want to go on a [Trek Relief](#) trip, what would that look like?

**Candice Young:** To go on a trip, you just need to sign up on our website. Our dates are there. We try to run one trip per program per year. That's our ideal. But if there are more people who want to come in as trip leaders and we can run more trips, so it's just a matter of capacity and basically to join a trip, you can either donate to be able to be part of this trip.

You can fundraise to be part of the trip, or we now have a new offering, which is you can do work trade. So basically, things that are needed to happen to run a nonprofit, you know, everything from social media to posting flyers to all of that stuff. We have a system where you can accrue credits towards the trip as well.

If you help out with the different things that are needed to run a nonprofit. So, and even things that are not listed on our website, if you have a professional offering, like email marketing, that kind of thing, then you could also fill out a form and share and propose what you have that can help out a nonprofit.

So basically, our board is comprised of two different categories. One is fundraising, and one is a compensation working group. Basically, [Trek Relief](#) is operating on a lot of trip credit for the work that people put in. So, it's developed, it's kind of progressed into this beautiful way of adding purpose to your travel.

And also, being able to be rewarded for putting in all the good work that gets, goes behind a nonprofit as well. So, it's like, yes, it's beautiful that we get to develop out these trips. I wish that we could do a full on fledged salary that people would love, but at least we can reward people for their time.

They make it by, by doing these trips and people can enjoy their experience with families and friends and that kind of thing.

**Matt Bowles:** Candice, I want to also ask you about some of your bigger-picture reflections on a couple of topics. You and I, of course, are both connected because of a number of reasons. One of which is that we both have a nonprofit background.

As you know, I worked in a nonprofit space professionally up until the age of 30. And so, as I travel around the world, I think about a lot of stuff and you, and I think about a lot of the same stuff I think as we're traveling. So, let me ask you this with all of your experience now with [Trek Relief](#), can you share some of the common problems are with the larger voluntourism space that you have observed and what are some of the keys to navigating around those? Any lessons you've learned and maybe even any adjustments that you've made over the last seven years as you've been building out [Trek Relief](#).

**Candice Young:** One of the major problems that is an issue is this kind of mentality that we have the better idea, right? It's very easy for Westerners to come in like, oh, you need to do this and that and this and that. But it kind of oversteps what is the actual situation, right? So, it's almost imposing our ideals on others. So, the approach that I like to go with is really asking, what is the community need? And how can we support that?

And I think that is a much softer way of getting in to provide support rather than be like you're doing it wrong. And this is the solution because that's never going to work out sustainably. Another one is dependency on foreign aid. So that's a big one too, because we are basically a fundraising vehicle, right?

But the catch is when you do too much foreign aid with a developing country, then you don't want to cause a dependency on that, right? Cause that could also create stagnation in their own development. So, it's best when communities are able to run on their own and do not need to rely on outside sources of funding.

But how many times have we heard of, oh, I wish if we just had the initial seed money, then we could get things started. So that's one of the things that we like to move towards is how are we providing the aid? Is it an initial thing? Or is it something that's going to require a lot of funding over the years?

So, we're really selective about what kind of projects that we're getting ourselves involved with. Is it just seed money? If it's seed money, then okay. Yes. Then that is beautiful, beautiful hope. Towards and support towards the dreams of what can be a more sustainable future without us in the future. The idea is to build programs that don't involve us in the future.

And one of the main ways to do that is we have learned over time, and we've made our programs and our mistakes along the way just as any organization does. But we've learned over time that partnering with reputable organizations on the ground is a sustainable way of moving forward. Because number one, they've got their systems in order.

Number two, they're on the ground. They know the prices of things. They know the language; they know how to make things run. And they understand the day-to-day situation of the project. And also, most often they also have other sources of funding as well. They're running things without us. And we are running trips maybe only once a year.

So, if anything, we are supporting what's already happening and we're not necessarily being the only funding that they're depending on.

**Matt Bowles:** I also want to ask you a couple of personal reflection questions. You've now been to over 50 countries and had all of these experiences. What impact do you think that all of that travel has had on you as a person?

**Candice Young:** I think there are a lot of different impacts, but I would say one that really stands out to me is that I feel different from others who haven't traveled as much, especially to developing countries. I think it's allowed me to release my need for a number to retire with, right? Because when we're thinking about economies, but on a global scale, and after spending time in Nepal, in Indonesia, and countries where the dollar stretches so much further, then it allows me to not feel I need to subscribe to the grind or the man or whatever it is, but to really just fully enjoy life without having to feel like I need to achieve a certain level because I need to survive, because I need this number, because now that I've experienced India and I've checked out of Ashram for just one night, but I spent 2.50 in this beautiful place with the Arabic Sea on one side, another beautiful canal on the other side. And it was like a 15-story room and fed and housed.

And I was Oh, I can retire now for \$2 and 50 cents a day. And I was like, Oh, okay. All right. So, whatever those numbers and salaries of 50K a 100 200 K, whatever the, like, to me, you can always make do. So, it's just a matter of having an open mind. And also realizing that America is not the only way to live.

There are so many beautiful places in the world that you do not have to grind as hard. And that is not the culture either. You can enjoy life. You can go to Mongolia, and you can sit outside of Europe and just stare out into beautiful nature all day. And that is totally acceptable. So, experiencing different cultures outside of the U.S. and experiencing it for an extended amount of time.

And then looking at the U.S. from outside the bubble. is incredibly refreshing and I think it allows me to release these expectations that are placed upon us if we're born in the U.S.

**Matt Bowles:** You have now been to over 50 countries. Why do you continue to travel? What does travel mean to you today?

**Candice Young:** I would say the majority of my trips at this point now, it's either got to have something, some level of giving back, some level of adventure, or some level of connection.

Maybe it could be traveling to the sea, be with a loved one, or traveling for this epic adventure riding Mount Kilimanjaro. Or it's got to be something that is raising money for something awesome, like [Trek Relief](#). So those are usually the key criteria that I need to say yes to a trip.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, Candice, are you ready to move in to the lightning round?

**Candice Young:** Yes.

**Matt Bowles:** Let's do it. All right. What is one book maybe that has significantly impacted you over the years? You'd most recommend people should read.

**Candice Young:** Oh man, can I say two?

**Matt Bowles:** Yes, you can say two.

**Candice Young:** Okay, cool. One is *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible* by Charles Eisenstein. And it is beautiful, especially in my work of [Trek Relief](#), because it does address those questions of, oh, well, is what I'm doing the most impactful thing I could be doing, right? And the bottom

line is that, you know, even if you were an amazing activist, doing amazing work and making all this change, if you were to have to take a stop for that, to take care of your 90 something year olds. Grandmother or something like that for her health, which work is more important, right? They're both important. It's okay. You can release the must be the best and just do it. So that was really nice. That was very liberating in my work with nonprofit and choosing projects.

The second one would be called Soul Shifts by Barbara Angelis. And it, just reading that book, I remember I could not put it down. I basically read through the book in one night just because it was so insightful. Everything was gold. It was like, it's the kind of book I bring to a party, and I just open the book and I give it to someone and I'm like, open the book. And then whatever is on the page, like that's meant for you. It's like almost like a tarot card reading because it was just, everything was high vibe, speaks directly to a way to just completely shift your thinking in a different way.

So those are my two favorite books that have impacted me.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, Candice, who is one person currently alive today that you've never met that you'd most love to have dinner with? Just you and that person for an evening of dinner and conversation.

**Candice Young:** I'm going to change your question again, I'm sorry. Because I don't want just a dinner with him. My answer is the Dalai Lama, and I want more than just a dinner with him because dinner is just like conversations fine and all. But the reason I want to be engaged with Dalai Lama is because his being, I want to absorb his being. And the best way to absorb someone's being and behaviors is through a trip.

Like I mentioned earlier, get to really pick up habits and behaviors and really get to see those examples in someone. So, I wish I could go on a trip with the Dalai Lama.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, Candice, knowing everything that you know now. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Candice?

**Candice Young:** I would say cherish all the relationships. Because I think that when I was younger, I was just kind of blindly moved through the world as an amoeba. At some point, I needed to develop more consciousness and become more aware of the inputs that are being put toward you and all that stuff. I think as I've gotten older, I realized how there were parts of myself when I was younger, where I was a little bit loner wolfy.

And I did that when I was Being my nomadic self and traveling and you get disconnected. I was traveling without a phone for a while, and I was just doing my thing. But I think as you get older, you realize relationships are the sauce of life.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, Candice, of all the places you've now traveled, what are three of your favorite destinations you would most recommend other people should definitely check out?

**Candice Young:** All right. We touched upon the Himalayas. It's great. If you've never been, I'm sure you've thought about it, at least in passing, maybe once or twice. Yeah, it totally lives up to the name. It's great. It's like seeing the ocean for the first time. Second place would be underwater, especially in clear, warm waters where you can absolutely fall in love with the ocean. That's where huge shifts in my life happened in the Himalayas.

**Matt Bowles:** Do you have a top, either scuba or free diving destination you might put people onto?

**Candice Young:** I just came back from the Komodo islands, Indonesia, and I was re-instilled with faith in nature and humanity and the earth. Because of the health of the corals out there, I had just had this perspective that the whole world is declining and we're just going to be a dead rock at some point soon.

But being there, it just felt like I was just reinstalled with hope. And the way the islands are set up there, there's currents, there's channels and all that stuff. And so, the channels keep things fresh. The bleaching doesn't happen as much over there. So, the corals are fresh. There was a lot of marine life, and I was just so impressed.

**Matt Bowles:** Amazing. And your third pick?

**Candice Young:** The third pick is the inner world. Because there's so much depth that you can explore in your own mind, that if you don't know what's going on in your own self, then your external experience is only going to be as deep as your internal experience. So, if you can go deep into yourself, then you can experience the outside world so much more deeply.

And everything will be so much richer. Your connections, your experiences, your interactions. Yeah, so going in is good.

**Matt Bowles:** All right, Candice, last question. What are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you have not yet been. Highest on your list you would most love to see.

**Candice Young:** One is the Stan countries; Kazakhstan. Just because a lot of these are so foreign to me. There's such a rich culture that is almost alien to me. I have not experienced them very deeply. So, I do sense of huge deepening in my being if I'm able to absorb that culture and that way of life a little bit. So yeah, spending some time out there, same reasoning for the Middle East and Africa, done little stints into Tanzania and South Africa, but not into other parts of Africa.

And just for the underwater world, I do Galapagos has always been on top of my list.

**Matt Bowles:** Yeah, the Galapagos is a super special place and incredible pick. All right, Candice, I want you to let folks know at this point how they can, first of all, find you, follow you on social media, connect with you, all that good stuff. And also, how folks can learn more about [Trek Relief](#), how they can come on a trip. How do you want people to come into your world?

**Candice Young:** Oh, thanks. Yeah, it'd be awesome to connect with you. If you're interested to learn more about what I'm up to, or [Trek Relief](#), you can find them on [Instagram](#). My personal is [Candice Candela](#) and then [Trek Relief](#) for the Trek Relief Instagram as well.

There's also <https://trekrelief.org/> so you can check out the trips that we have, the dates we have available, and we're publicizing that on social media as well. So, all the, all the social media handles, but same, same names.

**Matt Bowles:** Awesome. We are going to link all of that up in one place. So, folks can just go to the show notes for this episode at [themaverickshow.com](http://themaverickshow.com). There, you're going to find links to all the ways to contact, connect with, follow Candice, the [Trek Relief](#) website, ways to learn more about the dates and opportunities to be part of one of those trips. It's all going to be at [themaverickshow.com](http://themaverickshow.com).

Candice, this was amazing. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

**Candice Young:** Thank you so much for having me. It's such a pleasure to be with you. And also, I feel so honored that you even asked me to be on the show, so thank you so much.

**Matt Bowles:** Of course, you're doing amazing things. I wanted my audience to meet you and learn about all of the incredible and inspiring things that you're up to.

So, the honor was all mine to have you on the show. Thank you for being here. Great. And good night, everybody.