

A SciWomen Origin Story

EARYN MCGEE



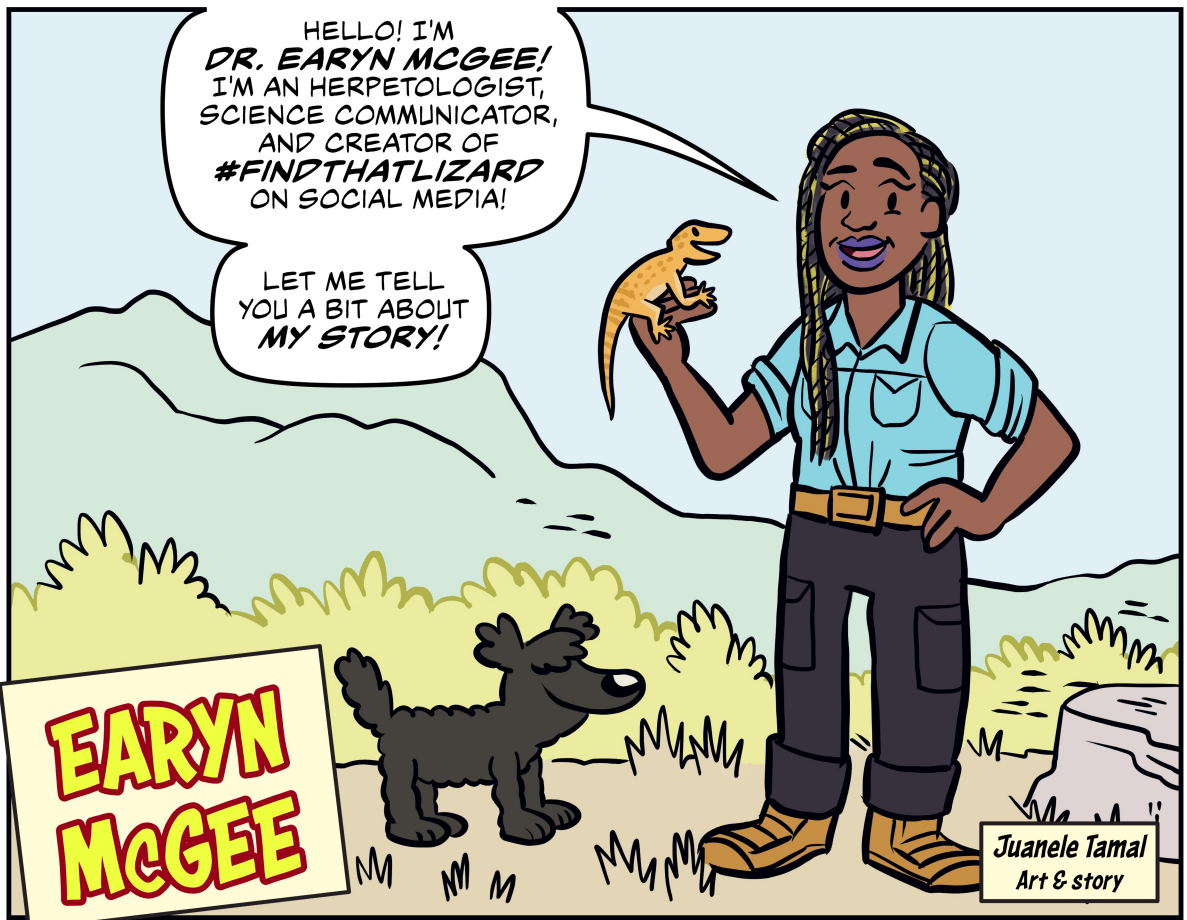
CAN YOU
#FINDTHAT
LIZARD?

Juanele 2024

SCI _ ALL

 AAAS
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

IF/THEN[®]
Ambassador



HELLO! I'M **DR. EARYN MCGEE!** I'M AN HERPETOLOGIST, SCIENCE COMMUNICATOR, AND CREATOR OF **#FINDTHATLIZARD** ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

LET ME TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT **MY STORY!**

EARYN MCGEE

Juanele Tamal
Art & story

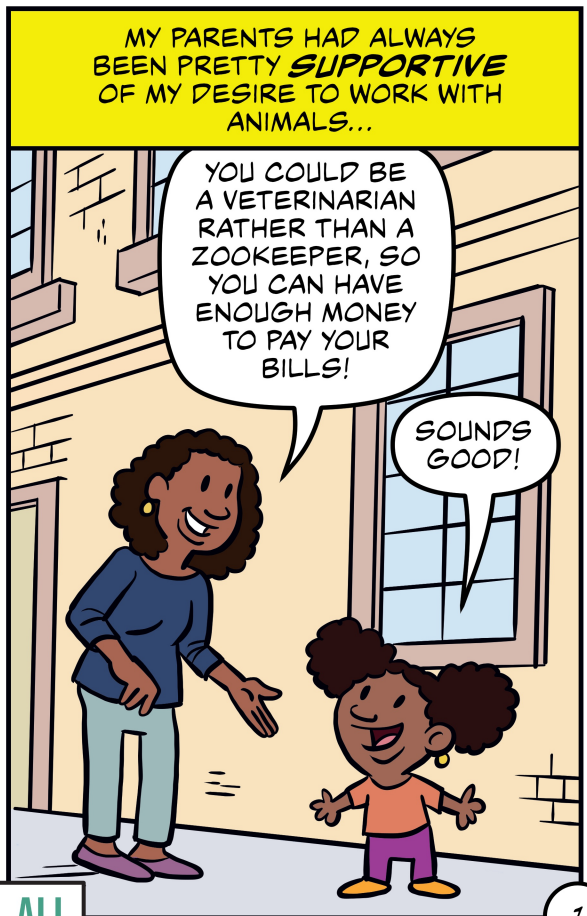
I WAS BORN IN ATLANTA! I GREW UP THERE AND IN LOS ANGELES, AND A LITTLE BIT IN NEW JERSEY!

MY PARENTS HAD ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY **SUPPORTIVE** OF MY DESIRE TO WORK WITH ANIMALS...



WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I WANTED TO WORK WITH ANIMALS --

-- I WANTED TO KNOW **HOW** ANIMALS SURVIVE IN THE WILD, AND **WHAT** THEY EAT!



YOU COULD BE A VETERINARIAN RATHER THAN A ZOOKEEPER, SO YOU CAN HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY YOUR BILLS!

SOUNDS GOOD!

I WENT TO **HOWARD UNIVERSITY**, WHERE I GOT MY UNDERGRAD DEGREE IN BIOLOGY!

I WANT TO WORK WITH **ANIMALS**, BUT I'M NOT EXACTLY SURE HOW YET!



THERE I MET DR. GEORGE MIDDENDORF, A **HERPETOLOGIST** WHO WAS WORKING WITH LIZARDS.

LIZARD PSYCHOLOGY IS A FASCINATING TOPIC!



...I STARTED TO LEARN ABOUT **ECOLOGY AND HERPETOLOGY!**

THIS IS **MORE ALIGNED** WITH WHAT I WANT TO DO!



I REALIZED PEOPLE WERE STILL ASKING **NATURAL HISTORY QUESTIONS** THAT I THOUGHT WERE ALREADY ANSWERED!





I ALSO STUDIED WHERE LIZARDS' FOOD SOURCES COME FROM!



THEN I STARTED **#FINDTHATLIZARD** ON SOCIAL MEDIA. IT'S KIND OF LIKE "WHERE'S WALDO", BUT WITH AN ACTUAL LIZARD **HIDDEN** IN THE PHOTO!



WITH **#FINDTHATLIZARD**, I WANT TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT A **BLACK WOMAN** CAN BE A **HERPETOLOGIST** --

-- AND I WANT TO **ENGAGE** THEM IN THE FIELD WORK I DO!



IT STARTED WHEN I WAS AT THE CHIRICAHUA MOUNTAINS. I **LOST TRACK** OF A CERTAIN LIZARD, THEN I SAW IT AGAIN BECAUSE OF A LARGE, NONTOXIC ORANGE PAINT MARK I'D PUT ON IT --



-- THEN I TOOK A PICTURE AND **SHARED** IT ON TWITTER!

TO MY SURPRISE, PEOPLE **COULDN'T FIND** THE LIZARD IN THE PHOTO I'D SHARED!

WHERE IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW, BUT THIS IS **FUN!**



NOW I **REGULARLY** POST PHOTOS WITH LIZARDS **HIDDEN** IN THEM. I INCLUDE CAPTIONS WITH A LOT OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIZARD. YOU'RE LEARNING, BUT IN A **FUN WAY!**



PEOPLE ALSO SUBMIT THEIR PHOTOS! THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH THEM **INTERESTING** LIZARD FACTS AND TO HAVE A GREATER **APPRECIATION** FOR LIZARDS!

I DIDN'T KNOW THIS ABOUT LIZARDS!



MY SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE WAS ONE OF THE REASONS I WAS CHOSEN FOR THE **AAAS IF/THEN AMBASSADORS PROGRAM!**



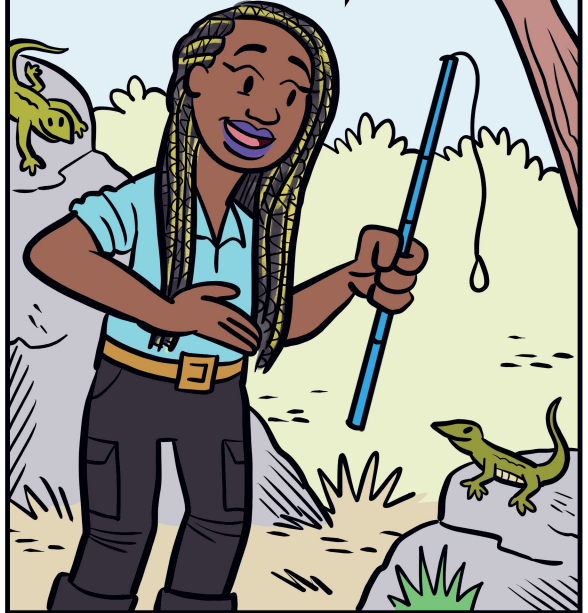
LIZARDS HAVE **DIFFERENT** PERSONALITIES. WHEN I APPROACH TO CATCH THEM, SOMETIMES THEY'LL **BITE** YOU, SOMETIMES THEY WON'T!

EASY, LITTLE FRIEND! I'LL JUST TAKE A COUPLE OF MEASUREMENTS AND THEN **LET YOU GO!**

OH, OKAY THEN!



I USE A **STICK** LIKE A FISHING POLE. IT HAS A SLIP KNOT ON THE END OF THE STRING. IT'S KIND OF LIKE FISHING!



PEOPLE ASSOCIATE CATCHING LIZARDS WITH HURTING THEM, BUT I **DON'T** HURT THEM! --

-- SO I PROPOSED THE TERM **LASSOING** INSTEAD, AS A SWITCH IN TERMINOLOGY. AND IT KIND OF STUCK!



YIKES, I'VE BEEN **LASSOED!**

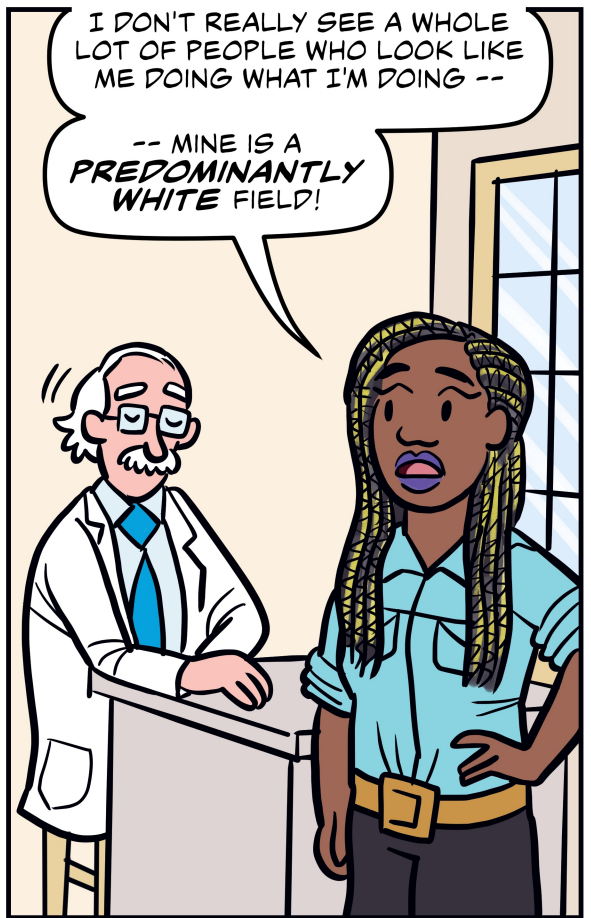
IN 2021, I WAS INCLUDED IN THE **30 UNDER 30** LIST OF FORBES MAGAZINE!

IT'S BEEN AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE TO BE **RECOGNIZED** FOR THE WORK I'M DOING!





MY INCLUSION IN THAT LIST IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO **EDUCATE** PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT A SCIENTIST LOOKS LIKE, AND THAT A HERPETOLOGIST CAN BE A **YOUNG BLACK WOMAN!**

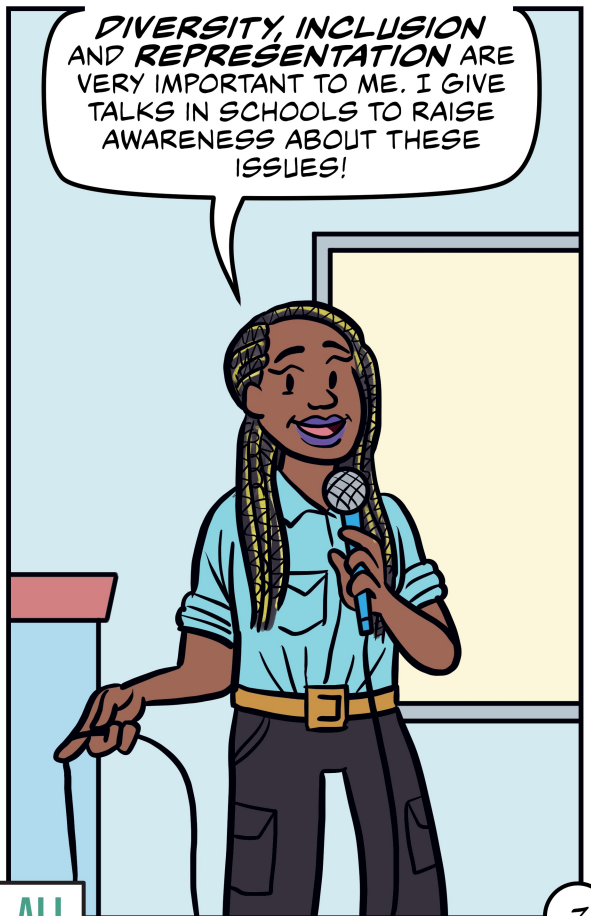


I DON'T REALLY SEE A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE ME DOING WHAT I'M DOING --

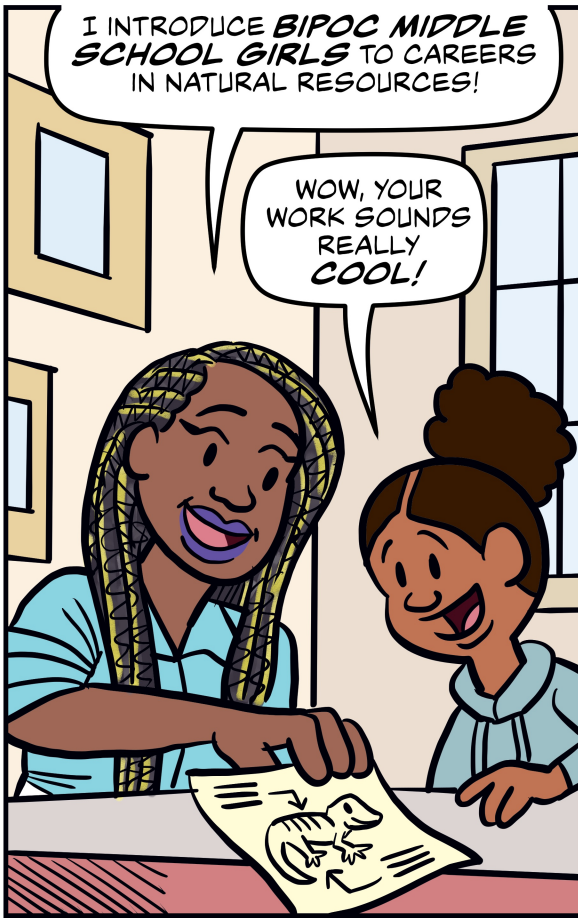
-- MINE IS A **PREDOMINANTLY WHITE FIELD!**



I WANT TO HOST A PROGRAM ON ANIMAL PLANET OR THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL. I SEE MYSELF AS A **"FUTURE NATURAL HISTORY SHOW HOST"**!

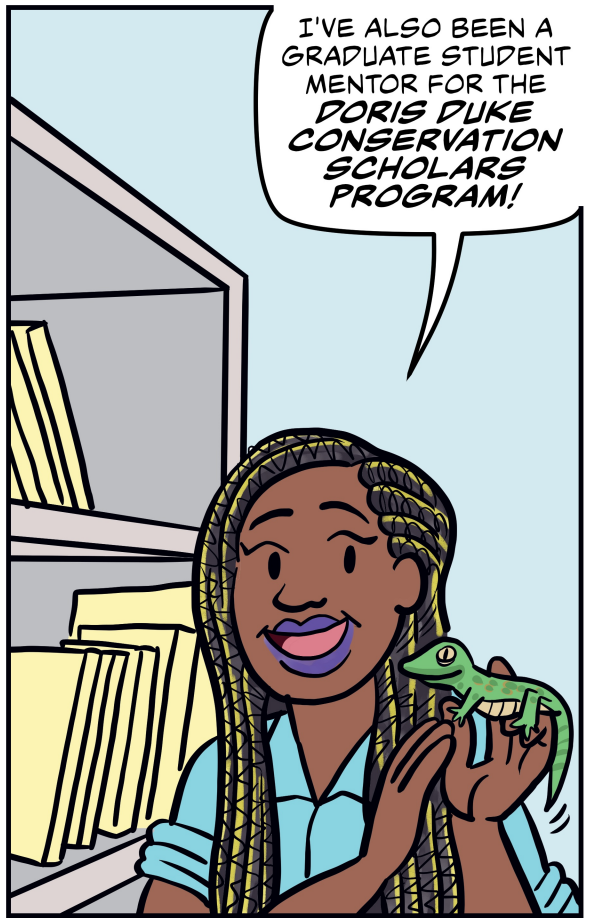


DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME. I GIVE TALKS IN SCHOOLS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THESE ISSUES!



I INTRODUCE **BIPOC MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS** TO CAREERS IN NATURAL RESOURCES!

WOW, YOUR WORK SOUNDS REALLY COOL!



I'VE ALSO BEEN A GRADUATE STUDENT MENTOR FOR THE **DORIS DUKE CONSERVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM!**

THE PROGRAM AIMS TO INCREASE **DIVERSITY** WITHIN THE CONSERVATION FIELD!



I'M ALSO PART OF **BLACKAFINSTEM**, AND CO-ORGANIZER OF **BLACK BIRDERS WEEK** --

-- AN EVENT CREATED AS A **RESPONSE** TO THE CENTRAL PARK BIRDWATCHING INCIDENT AND POLICE BRUTALITY AGAINST BLACK AMERICANS!

NOW I WORK FOR THE LOS ANGELES ZOO. I'M THE **COORDINATOR OF CONSERVATION ENGAGEMENT**. IT MIXES RESEARCH WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

I'M THE **FIRST** PERSON IN THIS POSITION!



PART OF MY JOB IS WITH OUR **PAID INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**. I MENTOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS **THROUGH** RESEARCH PROJECTS IN THE SUMMER!



WE HAVE PROJECTS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL L.A., AS WELL AS ON-SITE EDUCATION EVENTS. AND EVEN A PANEL AT **L.A. COMIC CON!**

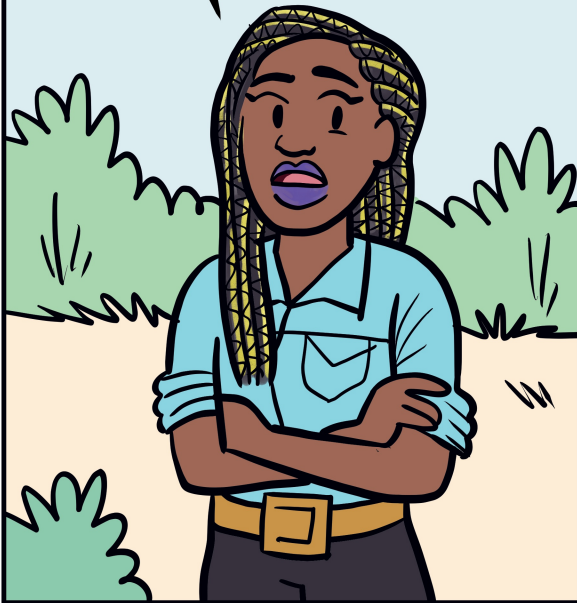


AT THAT PANEL, WE TALKED ABOUT THE **ANIMAL CROSSING NEW HORIZONS** GAME VS. CONSERVATIONISTS IN FIELD WORK **IN REAL LIFE!**

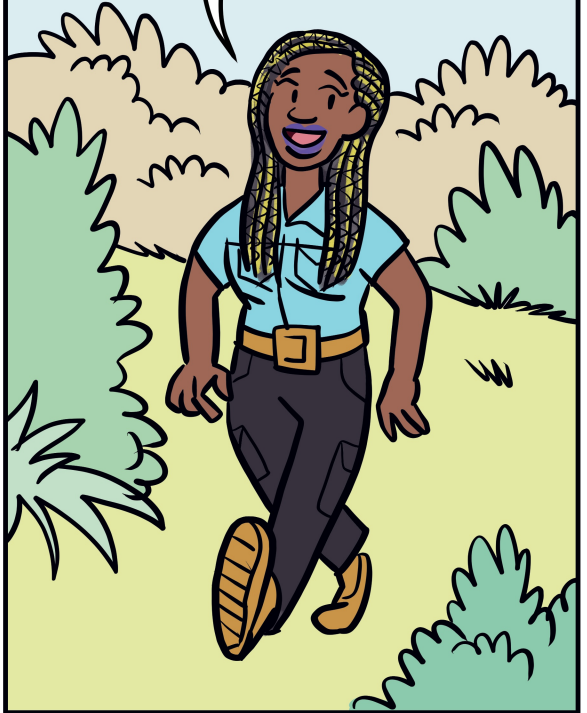
LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT ECOLOGY...



WHILE I'M REFERRED TO AS A **BLACK FEMALE SCIENTIST**, THAT'S ONLY USEFUL IF IT'S ABOUT **ACKNOWLEDGING OVERCOMING ADVERSITY** BEING RELATED WITH THOSE IDENTITIES!



ANYTHING ELSE IS **NOT**. WHY WOULD YOU BRING THAT UP IN NORMAL, EVERYDAY TALK?



I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED MY STORY! HERE'S SOME FINAL ADVICE: IT'S IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT YOUR GOALS IN THE **PRESENT TENSE!**

LIKE MY GOAL OF BEING A NATURAL HISTORY SHOW HOST IN THE FUTURE --

-- IT MEANS THAT YOU'RE GOING TO PUT THE **EFFORT** TO REALLY MAKE IT HAPPEN!

