

Healing the Earth: Dr. Jessica Hernandez's Environmental Vision

Dr. Jessica Hernandez comes from the Maya Ch'orti' and Zapotec Nations in Central America. Her father, a child soldier during the Central American Civil War, had to flee violence, which led to her family's coming to the United States.

Jessica first studied marine biology in college, followed by a doctorate in environmental science. She combines her deep knowledge of Indigenous traditions with modern science to fight for environmental and climate justice

Dr. Hernandez is the founder of Piña Soul SPC, a special organization that helps support Indigenous-led environmental projects. Her work focuses on making sure that Afro-Indigenous and Indigenous communities get the help they need to protect their lands and build sustainable futures.

Her book, *Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science*, takes readers on a journey through her own family's experiences and shows why traditional Indigenous knowledge is crucial for solving today's environmental problems. Instead of just trying to preserve nature, her approach is about healing and caring for the land in ways that honor Indigenous practices.

Dr. Hernandez has been recognized for her impactful work, including being named one of Forbes' 100 most powerful women in Central America. She also works with various organizations to make sure Indigenous voices are included in environmental policies and practices.

Through her science, writing, and community work, Dr. Hernandez is showing that protecting our planet and respecting Indigenous knowledge go hand in hand. Her message is clear: real environmental justice comes from understanding and working together with the people who have long cared for the land.

