

## Meet a Scientist: Janice Lao

Meet Janice Lao! She is an **environmental scientist**. Environmental scientists use their knowledge of science to help the environment.

Janice is also an **economist**. Economists study how people use money or how they exchange goods like food, water, or housing.

Janice is able to use her unique areas of expertise to advise businesses on how to be more **sustainable**. This means she tells businesses how to change their practices to be healthier for the Earth.



Janice works with companies all over the world! Protecting the environment is important for all countries and people.

We interviewed Janice to learn more about her!

### What was your childhood like? Did you like science?

I was born and raised in the Philippines to a Chinese father and a Filipino mother. (Now I live in the United States). Both my parents were the first in their families to graduate from college. They valued education and working hard.

My parents were both very good at math and science. I was always encouraged to do well in those fields and not to see my gender as a barrier. My father was an engineer who would often go to mining sites and sometimes take me with him. My mother was a political activist.



*The Philippines*

Seeing what my parents did opened my eyes to environmental and social issues at a young age. I wanted to do whatever I could to protect nature.

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## Describe a typical day at your job.

I'm always collaborating with different people inside and outside of the company I work in. I work with them to understand how we can implement our environmental and social initiatives in the most effective way possible. This involves lots of phone calls, meetings, and e-mails! I also travel often.

Another part of my job is reading a lot of material, analyzing data, and summarizing findings to share with others.

## Name a time in your career that something did not go as planned.

I shifted college courses three times because I wasn't sure what degree I wanted to pursue. I knew I wanted to make a difference in the world, but I wasn't sure how!

I started studying law, then tried engineering. Many people love these fields, but they were not a good fit for me. I switched to environmental science and economics; it was like my Goldilocks moment, just right for me!

I've never regretted trying out multiple paths because it made me who I am today. I'm glad my parents allowed me to be flexible enough to make mistakes before becoming a full-fledged adult. In fact, I call the mistakes "trial and error." The great thing is, I eventually got a full scholarship to Oxford, which is one of the world's top universities. So there are no failures!

## What advice do you have for students today?

I would say that there are always people who will not believe in you. Just accept that and make sure you're not the one who doesn't believe in yourself. In other words, believe in yourself!



*Ms. Lao wrote a book with her daughter, Esther, called "Sparky & Benny's Big Home Mystery." The book explores climate change. Ms. Lao is also featured in the book "Everyday Superheroes: Women in STEM Careers."*

