



Teresa Lloro-Bidart
Graduate, Environmental Studies

Teresa Lloro-Bidart graduated in 2009 with an M.S. in Environmental Studies. She obtained her B.S. degree in Biology from the University of Redlands in 1999 graduating with departmental honors and Summa cum laude. She will enter UCR's PhD program in Educational Leadership and Policy in the Fall of 2009 and has been given the Chancellor's Distinguished Fellowship Award to pursue her degree. Upon completion of her PhD, she hopes to teach at the college level or open an environmental charter elementary school in the inland valley. Teresa is an avid animal lover and is the advisor for a very active Roots and Shoots group where she currently teaches high school chemistry and Advanced Placement Environmental Science. Teresa's students attend environmental leadership conferences, participate in organic vegetable gardening, and have installed native plant gardens at their school. Her passions are animals, running, biking, reading, and spending time with her husband, family, and close friends.

Good morning everyone and congratulations to all of the graduates. I would like to open by thanking two of the most important people in the world to me, my parents. Without you, I would not be here today and I am forever thankful for all of opportunities that you have given me. I would also like to thank Dr. Voek's for his amazing and engaging Cultural Ecology Seminar and Dr. Bock for being patient with me as I learned SPSS.

Almost exactly ten years ago today, I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree in Biology. At that time, I was committed to the idea of being a registered dietician, and had no idea that life would

take me on a path to be an advocate for the environment. I have been a passionate animal lover since I was a small child and was taught by my parents how to respect and appreciate all living things and the environment. As the world's population continues to soar, the importance of caring for the earth is becoming paramount. The role that we have as citizens of the early 21st century is to learn how to respect the environment while at the same time not make enormous economic sacrifices that would be harmful to billions of people in the world, especially those in developing nations who already suffer so profoundly. It is our responsibility to ensure that more organisms do not suffer the fate of the Tasmanian tiger and the passenger pigeon, going extinct at the hands of human activities. We have an obligation to minimize our destruction to the planet. We have a responsibility to assist developing countries in achieving economic stability in way that less damaging to the earth than the path we embarked on ourselves.

The job that I do every day, educating youth about the environment and engaging them in outdoor activities is one that I consider to be of extreme importance. Children learn by doing and by interacting with the world around them. If that learning involves being a responsible citizen who cares for the earth, then we have the power to create a citizenry in the future that will be able to enjoy the natural resources of our planet in a more sustainable way. In my years as an environmental educator I have witnessed the power of youth programs in empowering children to not only to care about the environment, but also to have the desire and skills to make positive changes. Our children need to be encouraged to study engineering and sciences so that they will be able to develop renewable technologies that will be affordable for the average citizen and decrease our negative impact on ecosystems. They need to be taught how to consume less and have compassion for the other living things with which we share the environment.

My vision for the future of our planet is a positive one because without a positive outlook we will not be able to accomplish all that needs be done. I believe that people will be more responsible if they know how to be and if being responsible is accessible. Most people I know would drive an alternative fuel vehicle if it were more affordable and most would have solar panels on the roof of their houses if they weren't prohibitively expensive. This is why we need our children to be stewards of the environment; they have the capacity to change the world if we give them the tools that they need to succeed. I leave you with a quote from one of my favorite environmentalists, Dr. Jane Goodall. One of my students who is a California youth leader for Roots and Shoots was lucky enough to meet Dr. Goodall at a youth summit in Washington DC in April...

"Thinking back over my life, it seems to me that there are different ways of looking out and trying to understand the world around us. There's a very clear scientific window. And it does enable us to understand an awful lot about what's out there. There's another window, it's the window through which the wise men, the holy men, the masters of the different and great religions look as they try to understand the meaning in the world. My own preference is the window of the mystic."