



JANUARY 6, 2020 (/BLOG/2019/9/22/RUBI-RAJBANSHI-SUSTAINABILITY-CONSULTANT)

RUBI RAJBANSHI: Sustainability Consultant

CHANGE M8KER (/BLOG/CATEGORY/CHANGE+M8KER)

Rubi shows us that it's possible to fight climate change, be a conscientious mother, and enjoy life.



Visit Rubi's Website: Terrascope Consulting (<http://www.terrascopeconsulting.com/>)

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As a sustainability consultant, Rajbanshi helps companies quantify and reduce their carbon footprints. As a mother and consumer, she shows us the potential of our purchasing power.

There is something distinctly calming about Rubi Rajbanshi's voice. Her measured cadence is not what you'd expect from a mother of three who voluntarily faces the impacts of climate change on a daily basis. From sustainability reporting to carbon footprint analysis (and literally everything in between), her expertise spans all aspects of our environment and she is laser-focused on climate solutions and mitigation. Today, she is the founder of Terrascope Consulting (<http://www.terrascopeconsulting.com/>).

It is immediately clear that Rajbanshi sees climate change with an engineer's eye. It might have something to do with her training as a chemical engineer at MIT and an environmental engineer at Northwestern, where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees, respectively.

As an undergraduate student at MIT, Rajbanshi enrolled in an "Intro to Environmental Policy" course by chance, igniting an interest in the environment that would forever shape her life.

"I literally signed up for the class because I couldn't find anything to fit my schedule," she admits. "For the first time I started thinking about where my trash went, which lake or reservoir the water in my faucet originated from, and how electricity ran through my computer. I woke up to how these resources touched every part of my life. From that point on, I knew I wanted my career to be involved in respecting those resources."

So, what does a Sustainability Consultant do?

Today, Rajbanshi helps corporations big and small develop and deploy strategies to reduce their footprints. She quantifies and calculates their impacts and assesses the best ways and timeframes to reduce them. "There's a lot that companies can do," Rajbanshi says. Examples include "purchasing carbon offsets, reducing packaging, using more sustainable materials in products, procuring paper or utensils in cafeterias more sustainably, installing charging stations or sustainable building designs, recycling and composting, using renewable energy, the list goes on and on."

The California-based consultant also works on projects dealing with clean transportation. She helps companies promote and adopt low carbon transportation options, such as electric vehicles (EVs) or micromobility vehicles (like scooters!). Her expertise in this arena is informed by seven formative years with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, where she oversaw sustainability programs and initiatives. Have you heard of green roofs? She worked to install one on the Holland Tunnel in order to improve thermal insulation, greenhouse gas and air pollution reductions, and storm water-runoff reductions. During her time at the Port Authority, she also participated in climate resiliency studies and oversaw large greenhouse gas inventories of its operations.

After working in government and environmental consulting for more than a decade, Rajbanshi intimately understands how air, water, climate, and greenhouse gases are connected. She also knows how deeply these things impact our daily lives as consumers.

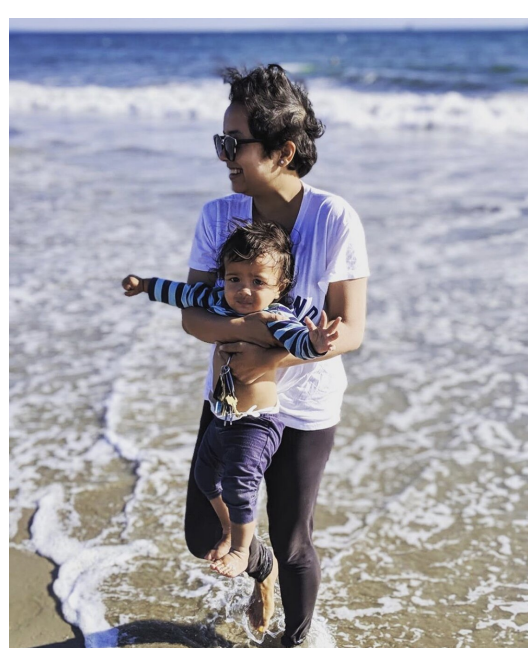
There's no rest for the weary when you're a mother of three trying to protect the planet.

Recreationally, Rajbanshi spends her free time investigating supply chains of clothing companies or writing letters to child toy manufacturing giants like Hasbro. Rajbanshi says, "They've done a lot of great things with their packaging, but I was curious to know what they've done with their actual toys (which are plastic). No response!"

Rajbanshi shares, "I constantly think about how we can preserve our resources in a way that will allow future generations to share the same resources, and how we can simultaneously live healthy lives."

Our era of convenience, according to Rajbanshi, is one of the main issues we're faced with today. "Clothing, packaging, everything—it's just convenient. We want *convenience*," she says. But a certain amount of education is necessary when making consumer choices, she notes, because every single item has a footprint. Rajbanshi points out that, yes, items have carbon footprints. But people don't always consider the water footprint.

On the plus side, Rajbanshi unequivocally believes that individual actions matter. In her home in Santa Barbara, she makes efforts to live a sustainable lifestyle. She does bulk shopping at the [Refill Shoppe](https://therefillshoppe.com/) (<https://therefillshoppe.com/>) in Ventura, which reduces her waste, plastic consumption, and, let's face it, clutter. "It's quite beautiful," says Rajbanshi. "I always feel calm and serene going in there, and it would be wonderful if more of these types of options were available to all consumers."



Fighting Fast Fashion

Rajbanshi believes that our purchasing power will have a ripple effect on the practices of major companies and corporations. She says, "A lot of companies are trying to minimize their carbon footprints, whether through compostable or lightweight packaging or sourced materials." The more consumers purchase from these companies, she posits, the more other companies will follow suit to compete for business.

Rajbanshi's personal purchasing guidelines are rooted in practices that support the environment and our finite resources. "Most of my apparel is from consignment shops or rental companies," she says. "Folks don't often realize how unsustainable apparel operations can be, especially with certain types of synthetic materials." Rajbanshi points out that fast fashion is often petroleum-based and clothes are unrecyclable, thus ending up in landfills. "So it's important to me to try and 'reuse' as much as possible." Nearly all of her family's clothes and shoes are from local consignment stores or ThredUp (<http://www.thredup.com/>) (an online consignment store). "I also no longer buy dresses for events. I use Rent the Runway (<http://www.renttherunway.com/>)." She is sure to buy new items from stores like Allbirds (<http://www.allbirds.com/>), Reformation (<http://thereformation.com/>), or brands that are committed to sustainability (and back it up with actual studies; she's always weary of greenwashing.) "It's my way of using the power of purchasing to nudge companies in the right direction."

Hope Exists, Says rajbanshi

Like many, Rajbanshi points to the action and awareness of young people when it comes to hope for the future. "My 6-year-old knows about climate change," she says. In school, her daughter learned some of the basics and spent a week doing zero-waste challenges where kids cut out plastic baggies and single-use items from their lunches. "Sustainability is becoming part of the fabric of our community, and I don't think it's going to stop. Especially with millennials, they are becoming so much more conscious about how they live and what they need—and what they don't need."

Rajbanshi thinks about the future, especially for her three children. "I wonder what kinds of cars my kids will drive, or if we'll still be in a drought, or what the air quality will be like. I think about the environment from their eyes." There are of course heavier potential

impacts to consider, but Rajbanshi prefers to focus on our power to make changes in our own lives, the technology that already exists, and our collective ability to drive systematic and meaningful change.

Lightning Round

The last book you read?

Door to Door: The Magnificent, Maddening, Mysterious World of Transportation by Edward Humes

Favorite film or documentary about the environment or planet:

An Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore

Favorite children's book?

I love reading Harry Potter with my children.

Most inspiring Public Figure?

Jane Goodall

Favorite hobby or activity that makes you happy?

Long walks with my kids, or shopping at the bulk food store.



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