**Why did you choose your intended graduate course of study and how do you hope to make a difference in your field? 300 words**

I gazed up into the tropical forest canopy and realized that an organism uniquely adapted to its location occupied almost every millimeter. My upbringing in rural Virginia and my curiosity about the workings of the natural world had focused me on the basic ecology of pristine tropical forests. But my first trip to town shattered the illusion of inviolability and forced me to reevaluate my academic trajectory. As our taxi left the gates, I realized that oil palm was planted up to the boundary of the park. I needed to complement basic ecology with economics, political science, and more to understand the dynamics of this working landscape in the Anthropocene. Accordingly, I sought out opportunities to learn how to manage human-dominated ecosystems to balance the needs of people and nature. During my Fulbright in Indonesia, I worked to understand how roads expose populations of commercially valuable tropical forest birds to poaching. Then, I worked in Hawaii to understand how habitat loss and climate change interact to endanger rare and endemic birds. These experiences inspired my graduate program, which is centered around understanding how heat and land cover interact to reduce the reproductive capacity of birds living in agriculture. My dissertation will generate concrete interventions applicable to working lands conservation in the Central Valley. My goal is to increase the climate resilience of human and non-human communities living in working landscapes by co-managing these landscapes for both humans and nature. To do so, I hope to serve as faculty in ecology or conservation at a research institution while collaborating with government scientists, policymakers, economists, and social scientists to produce rigorous, actionable, policy-relevant science. Furthermore, I will use my position to make academia more accessible and welcoming for scientists with marginalized identities to improve the rigor and equity of conservation science.

**Community organizer Grace Lee Boggs famously said, "We are the leaders we've been waiting for." Point Foundation agrees! Share an example of how you have contributed to positive change for marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ communities. Be specific about your personal participation and leadership in the project. How do you hope to build on this contribution in the future? OR, if you have not had opportunities to participate in this type of activity, discuss the specific contributions of another leader (like Boggs) that inspires you to advocate for positive change. How does their impact motivate you to be involved, and what do you want your future impact to be? 300 words**

Solving global challenges requires a diverse set of perspectives, yet academia is inaccessible and unwelcoming for many. I am passionate about empowering scientists of underrepresented identities and have done so throughout my career. During my Fulbright in Indonesia, I mentored three Indonesian post-baccalaureate students and involved them in all stages of my work, up to and including manuscript development for publication. One of my mentees was recently awarded a Chevening Scholarship and will attend graduate school in the UK. As a graduate student, I use inclusive language in job ads and holistic review strategies to prioritize diversity and inclusion while selecting new mentees. To date, I have mentored four undergraduates and two graduate students, several of whom are from excluded backgrounds. A major barrier for these students is securing paid positions. I successfully mentored my students in writing grant proposals to secure funded positions with me and then helped them conduct their own research projects. After writing letters of recommendation for them, my mentees have gone on to secure competitive field biologist positions and admission into graduate school. One recent mentee is conducting field research in Guatemala, where her maternal family originates, and enjoying bridging her cultural heritage and ecological research. Beyond mentorship, I have also sought to make my graduate program more inclusive by serving on a DEIJ task force, co-chairing a key DEI subcommittee, and now representing my fellow graduate students on my graduate program’s executive committee. Finally, I have also found my open presence as a non-binary person in the undergraduate classroom has been a major asset, with gender-nonconforming undergraduate students sharing how my presence has helped them feel welcome. Looking forward, I am gratified and excited to continue provide the representation that I lacked as a young person.

**Black lesbian feminist writer and activist Audre Lorde wrote, "We are powerful because we have survived, and that is what it is all about -- survival and growth." How have your identities and experiences contributed to your growth and power? 300 words**

I am grateful for the opportunities I have received to grow beyond my origins. I am non-binary and grew up in a rural area without representation. After relocating to California for graduate school, I have finally recognized and begun to express my gender identity. I could have spent my life in an identity that felt suffocating, in a place that did not accept my full humanity, simply because I faced financial barriers. I would not have been able to attend university without the full scholarship I received from Cornell University. I felt my socioeconomic class keenly there. But after university, I won a Fulbright to conduct an independent research project in Indonesia. I learned to speak Indonesian and spent hours in conservation with our local guides, and in the process, learned how privileged I was, despite the challenges my upbringing posed.

My experiences with financial insecurity and gender identity, coupled with my experiences abroad, have forged my determination to use my privilege for positive change. I pursue this ambition in three main ways. Firstly, I seek to produce actionable science. I have co-developed research abroad with NGOs in service of their community-driven research programs, and my current research program is focused on conservation science applicable to farms across the US. Secondly, I mentor and collaborate with colleagues that have been historically excluded from academia, both abroad and in the US. Finally, I am involved as a leader in efforts to build a more just and inclusive community at UC Davis.