



**TÄLLBERG/ELIASSON**  
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP PRIZE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Tällberg Foundation Announces Leadership Prize Winners

Sylvia Earle, Jared Genser,  
Nithya Ramanathan  
Receive 2020 Awards

**Stockholm and New York, November 25, 2020**—Today the Tällberg Foundation announced the winners of the 2020 Tällberg/Eliasson Global Leadership Prizes, awarded annually for extraordinary leadership—in any field and any country—that is courageous, innovative, rooted in universal values and global in application or in aspiration.

The 2020 laureates:

**Sylvia Earle**, one of the world's foremost oceanographers, for her thoughtful, relentless activism and pioneering research aimed at conserving the oceans for the good of the planet and of humanity.

**Jared Genser**, a human rights lawyer, for his urgency, creativity and dedication to using the law to free political prisoners, protect human rights and challenge autocracy around the world.

**Nithya Ramanathan**, an engineer and social entrepreneur, for her work to save lives through the innovative application of technology, creating and applying data-driven solutions to global challenges.

The Prize and the Foundation's leadership initiatives are made possible by the generous support of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

"This year's jury chose these extraordinary leaders, who work in very different contexts on very different challenges, because of their shared commitment to making the world a better place through concerted, creative, and practical action," said Alan Stoga, Tällberg Foundation chairman.

“Above all else, the inspiring work of these three remarkable leaders brings us hope when we need it most,” said SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos. “The range of fields in which they work speaks to the vision of leadership the Prize represents, one that looks beyond traditional hierarchies to focus instead on real, positive outcomes for people and for our planet. On behalf of everyone at SNF, warmest congratulations to Jared Genser, Nithya Ramanathan, and Sylvia Earle.”

Nominations for the Prize, which carries a \$50,000 stipend, can be made by anyone, anywhere through an online process. In 2020, 2,165 leaders were nominated from 135 countries, representing a wide range of disciplines, occupations, and political perspectives.

The awards will be presented during a virtual celebration and webinar on **December 8 and 9** that will be live streamed at **10:00 AM EST / 16.00 CET** on [www.tallbergprize.org](http://www.tallbergprize.org).

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### **About the Tällberg Foundation**

The Tällberg Foundation, with offices in Stockholm and New York, aims to provoke people to think—and therefore act—differently about the global issues that are shaping their present and their future.

For more information, contact [office@tallbergfoundation.org](mailto:office@tallbergfoundation.org).  
Learn more at [tallbergfoundation.org](http://tallbergfoundation.org) and [tallbergprize.org](http://tallbergprize.org)

### **About the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF)**

SNF is one of the world’s leading private, international philanthropic organizations, making grants to nonprofit organizations in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and sports, and social welfare. SNF funds organizations and projects worldwide that aim to achieve a broad, lasting, and positive impact for society at large and exhibit strong leadership and sound management. The Foundation also supports projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as an effective means for serving public welfare.

Since 1996, the Foundation has committed more than \$3.1 billion through over 4,700 grants to nonprofit organizations, in 132 nations around the world.

Learn more at [SNF.org](http://SNF.org).

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## LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

### True Blue: Sylvia Earle

*Sylvia Earle, a winner of the 2020 Tallberg Eliasson Global Leadership Prize, behaves like a woman running out of time, which she is. The world's foremost oceanographer—the Jacques Cousteau of our era, dubbed “Her Deepness”—she is on the road most of the year, and has logged countless hours underwater since her first dive, in a Florida river, when she was 16. But where Cousteau introduced audiences to the wonders of the deep, Earle warns of their disappearance, educating people on what is being lost to pollution, overfishing, and climate change.*



She is not without hope. “I’ve been a witness of the greatest time of loss” she says—referring to the removal of 90 percent of the big fish from the ocean and the loss of half its coral. “At the same time, we have learned more than at any time in history.” A National Geographic explorer-in-residence since 1998, Earle herself has been studying marine life for more than five decades, and was the first woman to serve as chief scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among other pioneering achievements.

About a decade ago, she founded Mission Blue, which has been doggedly establishing “Hope Spots”—marine protected areas—in the oceans, with the goal of protecting 30 percent of the ocean by 2030. Each is backed by a community of what she calls “champions,” who have made a commitment to take care of them. “We need eyes in the ocean,” she says. With her daughter, she continues to develop new technologies that can provide enhanced access to the sea.

“We certainly need scientists to go deep,” she says, “but I really want to get teachers. I want to get the kids. I want CEOs, I want the leaders of countries to go see what’s in their blue backyard.” The goal is to change the way humans relate to the ocean. As she once said about the consumption of cod, halibut, swordfish, and other large marine predators, “Eating these fish is like eating the last Bengal tigers.”

Despite her record-breaking underwater adventures, she is somewhat wistful about the limited time any diver can spend in a deep-sea environment. “Jane Goodall had 15 years ...

looking at one species that she got to know so well that she transformed the way people think about [it]," she points out.

Yet today, as a pandemic and climate change are revealing daily just how much human activity is affecting the planet, Earle is embracing her leadership role. That has meant limiting her own opportunities for exploration so that others, particularly young people, can experience the deep. They come back changed, she says, and this is creating "a network of ambassadors who could see what I could see."

She recalls that when National Geographic first asked her to write about life underwater, in 1970, she was reluctant, fearful of being viewed as a popularizer—until she came across an essay by Thomas Huxley: "He said that as a scientist you have a responsibility." A half-century later, that responsibility weighs much heavier. "We've got the evidence now as never before," she says. "My plans are to do whatever I can to take this moment and build on it."

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*Sylvia A. Earle is a pioneering ocean scientist, explorer, author, influential speaker and conservation leader known as a global "ambassador for the ocean," Time Magazine's First Hero for the Planet, a Library of Congress Living Legend, National Geographic Society Explorer in Residence, Founder of Mission Blue, Founder of Deep Ocean Exploration and Research, Founder of Deep Hope, Founding Ocean Elder, Council Chair for the Harte Research Institute and former Chief Scientist of NOAA. A graduate of Florida State University with MA and PhD degrees from Duke University and 33 honorary doctorates, noted for break-through ecological explorations and effective conservation of marine ecosystems with a network of more than 130 "Hope Spots" and development of technology for access to the deep sea, she is featured in the Netflix film, Mission Blue and National Geographic's Sea of Hope, and received more than 150 honors including the Netherlands Order of the Golden Ark, the Princess of Asturias Prize for Concord, the TED Prize, Royal Geographic Society's Patron's Medal and the National Geographic's Hubbard Medal.*



## LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

# The Ripple Effect: Jared Genser

*Jared Genser's client list reads like a Who's Who of democratic aspiration: Václav Havel, Desmond Tutu, Elie Wiesel, Liu Xiaobo, and Anwar Ibrahim to name a few. But the international human rights lawyer will never forget his first, James Mawdsley, who was imprisoned in Burma in 1999, with a 17-year sentence for handing out leaflets. "It was an amazing experience for me as a law student to get him out of jail and to be there when he arrived in London after 416 days in solitary confinement and watch him reunited with his family," he recalls.*



"I was kind of off and running from there," he adds. "I knew I wanted to be an international human rights lawyer and I had my eye on the big prize, which was 'How do I have the biggest impact possible and leverage the most support to do that, combined with a lot of flexibility and organic growth?'" About a decade later, this question would spur Genser to leave his partnership at the global law firm of DLA Piper, and found his own public interest firm, Perseus Strategies, LLC.

He credits DLA Piper with allowing him a lot of pro bono work, and also for a model that he uses today: "an asynchronous philanthropy model—small investments, large return," as he describes it. "Although we may appear to be a small team ... we are always working with partners all over the world, on the ground in the countries in which we work, as well as through other law firms." Perseus looks to take on cases that will have a ripple effect, and to free political prisoners to continue their work.

If the 20th century, with its world wars and genocides, inspired the creation of an international human rights system, the challenge of this century, Genser believes, is to get states to live up to their commitments. For instance, in a meeting with human rights activists in 2005 to strategize how to get the U.N. Security Council to take action on Burma, he pointed out that there was already a legal framework in place: the U.N. charter. He could make a case, if he had the clients—which is how he ended up representing Havel and Tutu.

More recently, Genser was appointed by Secretary General Luis Almagro as Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect to the Organization of American States. In this pro bono diplomatic post, he will be working with OAS members, international organizations, and civil society to develop a regional system to prevent and respond to mass atrocity crimes and will also be advocating for greater global engagement to address the ongoing crimes against humanity in Venezuela.

A winner of the 2020 Tällberg Eliasson Global Leadership Prize, he rejects the idea that he's a crusader. "All I'm simply trying to do is to stand in solidarity with home grown, small 'd' democracy activists who are trying to make their communities and their country a better place, and to serve them. Servant leadership is something that is very, very important to me." He won't get involved in a case or cause without being asked, and he starts each time with "a presumption of ignorance on my part."

As for the considerable experience he has gained, Genser does everything he can to pass it on. "I never say no to anybody who reaches out to me to talk to me," he says. Between ongoing cases and other projects—which currently include helping to reform the U.N. human rights system and developing a show for Amazon (about a "far more dashing and handsome than me" human rights lawyer)—he tries to mentor the next generation. "That ripple effect is only possible if you're always in a learning mode and in teaching mode, and you think very carefully and deliberately about how you maximize your impact."

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*Jared Genser is an international human rights lawyer who has spent his career practicing law, engaging in serious scholarship, and teaching and mentoring the next generation of human rights lawyers. Referred to by the New York Times as "The Extractor" for his work freeing political prisoners worldwide, his client list has included people like Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Desmond Tutu, Liu Xiaobo, and Elie Wiesel. Jared has recently been designated as Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect by the Organization of American States (OAS). He is also co-Executive Producer of a dramatic TV series based on his life being developed with actor Orlando Bloom for Amazon Studios. He has taught as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center and the University of Michigan and University of Pennsylvania law schools and his public interest law firm Perseus Strategies has hosted more than 50 interns in the last decade. And Genser has published three books on the topics of arbitrary detention, mass atrocity crimes, and the UN Security Council and has a forthcoming book on reforming the UN human rights system.*



## LEADERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

# Data Minded: Nithya Ramanathan

*Nithya Ramanathan won't deny that she loves engineering puzzles. "I just find them really fun to solve," she says. "But ultimately I get pretty bored unless I'm solving that bigger, human-centered problem." The computer scientist and C.E.O. of the non-profit Nexleaf Analytics is talking about really big problems here—climate change, pandemics, infant mortality—and about designing public health and environmental solutions based on data.*



A winner of the 2020 Tällberg Eliasson Global Leadership Prize, Ramanathan says she has been wired for this kind of work since childhood, when her climate scientist father's outlook informed family dinner-table conversation. Since she co-founded Nexleaf in 2009, the company has focused on clean cook-stove technologies, vaccine temperature monitors, and improved NICU care, partnering with global stakeholders including WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which operates in close coordination with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

On each project, cutting-edge data collection has been just the first step. What distinguishes Nexleaf, she says, is "the ability to put the right data in front of the right person, and have the right conversation at the right time." She talks at length about the importance of building trust, not only with major institutions but also with the countries in which her diverse team of health, data science, software, and field experts work. "Nexleaf is probably the only data company, in terms of our competitors, who has a team in Tanzania, and in Nigeria, and in India. So when we go to the government, we're represented by people from in-country," the U.S.-born Ramanathan notes. "I don't believe in Westerners attempting to solve global problems alone, especially when they resist engagement with experienced people on the ground or in the government."

Like many in her field, she views Covid-19 as both crisis and opportunity. "It's not enough if Nexleaf scales," she says. "We need the entire immunization sector to be thinking differently about data, distribution, and equity." As a result, her concept of leadership has evolved: "I actually see myself as a conduit of information, and continuing to be that voice of what is

happening on the ground, in order to help design and affect how the money and resources flow globally.”

Aware of the security and privacy pitfalls surrounding data analytics, Ramanathan has long advocated that countries and households actually own the data Nexleaf collects, a belief that Gavi has now codified: “When we deploy a sensor in a household, or we deploy a sensor in a country’s supply chain, that is their resource.” She also knows that sensor-based data can be wrong; her PhD thesis was about faulty data from sensors.

But ultimately, she believes, “Data is a really incredible unifying force. And when everybody is able to look at the same blueprint, we can all quickly agree on what is happening, and what’s not happening. Even in households. When we go to a woman’s household and we say, ‘Oh, how has your clean cooking solution been working for you?’ Most often she will initially respond by politely telling us, ‘Oh, it’s fine. We love it. Thank you for the solution.’ But actually, when I or another Nexleaf team member pulls up the data dashboard to show to that same woman, and we say, ‘Oh, that’s so interesting. Because actually when you look at the data, we see that you weren’t using it every day, and that you stopped using the cook-stove two months ago. What happened?’ That’s when we get the real truth from the woman about what is working for her – and what’s not meeting her needs.”

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*Nithya Ramanathan is the Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder of Nexleaf Analytics, a tech non-profit dedicated to preserving human life and protecting our planet. Nexleaf’s unique approach brings together sensor design, data analysis, software engineering, and field engagement to identify and address big problems. Nexleaf technology currently protects the vaccine supply for 1 in 10 babies born on Earth. Nithya and her team have achieved this outsized impact by working shoulder-to-shoulder with Ministries of Health — rather than attempting to bypass governments — to scale cutting-edge technologies refined through close collaboration with personnel at every level of the health system, from top-tier government officials to Last Mile health care workers. Nithya is a PopTech Social Innovation Fellow, Switzer Environmental Fellow, and a Rainer Arnhold Fellow. She is the winner of the 2017 Hedy Lamarr Award for Female Tech Pioneer.*

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