

StoryCorps Interview at the Pacific Science Center
Dana Riley Black and her daughter Carmen

Dana: So, Carmen, what's your favorite subject in school and why?

Carmen: Well, I like science a lot because I want to be a scientist when I grow up and, in science, you can do things with the things you get to use; like you can touch 'em and play with them a little and stuff like that.

Dana: Is there a particular type of science that you like?

Carmen: Well, I wanna to study rocks and minerals. I wanna be an archeologist when I grow up.

Dana: When I was growing up like you, Carmen, I thought I was supposed to be a scientist. And I took all the math classes and all the science classes, just like my mom and dad told me I needed to do. And when I went to college I still kind of thought I was supposed to be a scientist, so I took all my science classes and all my math classes and I practiced doing research in people's labs, but I wasn't really thinking that's what I wanted to do when I graduated from college, and I needed a job. And there was a job at the Pacific Science Center; a job called a Science Education Associate. And it was a job that allowed me to do a number of different things at the Science Center. I got to drive their vans, their Science on Wheels, all across Washington state, and I got to teach science in classrooms everywhere. And that was really helpful for me because I started to learn that maybe I didn't to do science, but I wanted to learn how science was taught. And, do you know what happened to me? I was over on the east side of the mountains, and I was in a school, and I was all excited to teach, and this boy—was probably about fifth grade—came up to me and said, "What're you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I'm here from the Pacific Science Center and I'm going to teach you science today; we're going to have any assembly and an exhibit area." And, do you know what he said to me? He said, "No, why are *you* here? You're a girl. You can't teach us science." And I thought, "Oh yes, I can teach you science. I will show you I can teach you science." And I went away from that experience and I started to look around and read more books and I learned there's a lot of people who don't think that girls can learn science, and there's a lot of people who don't think girls can do science, and there's a lot of people who don't think girls can teach science very well. And, so, I decided that I would go back to graduate school and study that and learning about teaching science in schools and making it fair so that everybody can learn science.

Carmen: What inspires you, or keeps you motivated at your job?

Dana: I think I have a super cool job and a pretty easy way to be motivated because, when I get up in the morning, I get to go work at a place where we're thinking about the future every single day. I think some people go to work and they just think about when's it going to be dinner time or when do I get to go have my lunch; but, because I work in a research lab, where people are doing pretty exciting science, they're always thinking about the future and how to solve problems for our world and I just love that—that inspires me. But my work also helps me think about the future because I'm thinking about children, kids like you, and how you're going to grow up and be part of the future that these scientists are

creating. And, together, thinking about kids growing up and thinking about scientists doing their work, I just get so excited about everything I do all the time.