



Seattle Metro Chamber – Under Construction with Alejandro Grajal

Marilyn Strickland Welcome to Under Construction. I'm your host, Marilyn Strickland, CEO of the Seattle Metro Chamber. In each episode, we take you behind the scenes with the people and companies shaping our evolving region. Today, we meet the president of Woodland Park Zoo, Alejandro Grajal. Alejandro, thanks for being here with us today.

Alejandro Grajal Glad to be here. Great honor.

Marilyn Strickland You are the eighth president in the zoo's history. Some of our listeners are familiar with the zoo and some are not. So could you tell us a bit more about the zoo. Where is it located? How big is it? And how many visitors do you get every year?

Alejandro Grajal So Woodland Park Zoo is one of these amazing institutions in the Seattle area. Most people may not know, but it's a 115-year-old institution, and it's lived through many iterations in over a century. It's also one of the most visited cultural institutions in the region in the Pacific Northwest.

Alejandro Grajal At 1.4 million visits a year and 36,000 member families, not only the most visited but the largest membership of any cultural institution in the region. Perhaps for our business community, very interesting, over 50 percent of our visitors are millennials.

Alejandro Grajal And it's also one of the most diverse visitations of any cultural institution. So you walk around the park and it's easy to listen to 10 or 12 different languages when you are in Woodland Park Zoo.

Marilyn Strickland Interesting. So I think about Woodland Park Zoo and I think of being an elementary school in Tacoma and you're taking a field trip to the zoo and the journey on the bus and how it felt as though we were driving to San Diego. But it was a really long journey and really fun. Can you talk a bit about how much time does the average visitor spend when they visit the zoo?

Alejandro Grajal There are two kind of categories of visit, well perhaps three. The school field trips. Of course, that they, you know, they arrive at 11:00 and they're all of them, have

to leave out at 1:30. So that's that's a big what I call the yellow bus tsunami. It all comes at once and they all leave at once. We also have the day visitors, which try to see it all in one day and it's hard because it's 95 acres.

Marilyn Strickland Right.

Alejandro Grajal So, people spent you know six, seven hours and it's exhausting and the kids start crying and all that. And then we have our members. Which you know by virtue of being our membership they come for two or three hours, they see their favorite part. They sit on a bench and, and they spend a few hours. But it's hard to see it all in one day. Literally at the size of the zoo.

Marilyn Strickland Right. So let's talk a bit about your personal background. You grew up in Venezuela. You studied ecology and evolutionary biology at a university there Universidad Simon Bolívar. So talk about growing up in Venezuela. Tell us about your parents and tell us what got you interested in ecology as a child.

Alejandro Grajal So, that's interesting. I was born in Madrid in Spain and, and as at eleven years old my family emigrated to Venezuela. And, and I have to say was a wonderful transition. It's a tropical country. Probably one of the most beautiful places on earth. And it was interesting that I ended up being an ecologist and a biologist. Because my parents had six kids. I'm the oldest. And we lived in a relatively small, three-bedroom apartment. So my mother had plastic plants and we never had a pet. Because of course, that was a lot of work. So my mother and my father will probably pack us in the back of the station wagon every Friday afternoon. And we would go to the beach or the mountain or somewhere because, you know, the kids were crawling up the walls. And that I think is where I built my, my natural connection.

Marilyn Strickland Interesting. So if you think about Venezuela in the news today, we know that there is suffering happening. Can you maybe share with us your thoughts on what's happening in the place where you grew up?

Alejandro Grajal Well of course it's, it's heartbreaking. I mean I I still think of myself as, as you know, I had lived there for over 25 years. I still have two sisters there. It's a giant, probably one of the largest, if not the largest, humanitarian crisis that the hemisphere has suffered in the last century or so. Over 3.5 million displaced people. the country run out of electricity for four days. There were almost 500 people that died in hospitals because they couldn't get dialysis or medical procedures. It's a giant crisis.

Alejandro Grajal I really have to commend you know, the administration, the U.S. and a lot of friendly countries in the European community and in South America that have really supported a a solution to this. And I just hope, literally hope, that, that this is solved soon.

Alejandro Grajal It's heartbreaking to see a country with the resources that Venezuela has in this amazing and sad situation.

Marilyn Strickland No, it really is sad. And I think you know to your point, the international community has set it up and they're trying to really address this humanitarian crisis.

Alejandro Grajal That pressure needs to stay there and we need a solution quickly.

Marilyn Strickland Yes. So from Venezuela you came to the U.S. and from what I know, you were actually at the University of Florida where you studied zoology and tropical conservation and development. So talk about your journey to Florida and then talk about your experience as a college student there.

Alejandro Grajal So in a sense, I think for any cultural transition. And of course this was my second immigration of sorts. After 35 years of being here in the U.S., I'm still, I'm grateful for the amazing opportunity that this country provides. And it's something that we take for granted. But to me, walking into a world-class university like the University of Florida, much like the University of Washington here, where you have all of these resources and floors and floors of libraries, and laboratories with the latest equipment. And to me was kind of mind-boggling. They gave me a desk and an office, and they gave me a little box with a stapler. And you know, and tape and pens and so on, and I almost fell to my knees in gratitude.

Marilyn Strickland Right.

Alejandro Grajal Because of that. So it was an amazing opportunity. Was a really good time to be there because the University of Florida was exploring interdisciplinary studies of conservation and development. So I had the lucky opportunity to spend three years of my PhD program in what I would call ivory tower zoology, and then I spent a year and a half in international economic development and social studies. So to me, that really kind of forged my professional future. Tried to answer the questions what are the economic and social questions that can answer conservation problems? And I think that that was my real interest in understanding development and economic development as a tool for conservation.

Marilyn Strickland Right. You know, and you talk about growing up in Venezuela in a place that's a very tropical. You're now in Florida. Which is, you know, a state that is very tropical. Can you talk a bit about maybe is it, is there a fun fact that our listeners don't know about a tropical animal, or what is your favorite tropical animal?

Alejandro Grajal I have to say, I did my dissertation on a very strange animal. For the listeners, you can Google it. It's called a hoatzin. H-o-a-t-z-i-n.

Marilyn Strickland Everyone's Googling it right now.

Alejandro Grajal Yes. And it is what I call one of, probably the oddest bird in the world. It does all kinds of crazy stuff. So I would. I would just stop it at that. But I still, after you know 30 years working with this bird, I'm still in awe about this animal.

Marilyn Strickland And where would you go today to see such a bird?

Alejandro Grajal The Amazon. It's a bird that lives in Oxbow Lakes of the Amazon on the Orinoco Basin. And that's where I did all my graduate school studies.

Marilyn Strickland So, when you are an academic, you obviously do a lot of publishing as well.

Alejandro Grajal Yes.

Marilyn Strickland Because the university wants that. So, you've published over 40 books, chapters, articles and scientific publications. So, can you share maybe very briefly, some of the topics that you've written about? And I think the other question I have too, Alejandro, is why is it important for people outside of your field to read and learn about climate change and changing zoo motivations?

Alejandro Grajal Well, it's important because again, with the wave of what I would call fake news and distributed expertise. So that everybody now on Instagram is an expert on everything. I think it is, it is critical for us to go to the actual sources and people that know what they're talking about.

Marilyn Strickland Real science.

Alejandro Grajal And the problem as you know well, and I'm glad you're doing this podcast, is that in all of our disciplines, we can get really insular. And we start talking with our own language and our own values. And it's important for us to bridge to broader communication. So I would say, of those 40 books, chapters and articles, almost probably half of them are unreadable almost to the general public, because they're really academic. You know, they have a lot of statistic modeling and regressions. And things like that.

Alejandro Grajal But I would say about half of those is actually in, in what I would call a more accessible voice in ranging topics from ecology. But mostly about behavior change and particularly what are the barriers and understandings of people about climate change and how climate change can become more normative social behavior for everybody. So, I've spent quite a bit in the policy aspects of climate change and conservation. And how can people engage in positive environmental behaviors.

Marilyn Strickland So, I do have a question for you. So you know, you as an academic, you do a lot of writing and you know, having looked at academic articles myself sometimes. I read them. I say, I have no idea what this says.

Marilyn Strickland But you did talk about writing some, you know, some pieces that were accessible. So of all the writings that you had, what would we recommend that one of our listeners can access so they can get an idea of some of the thoughts you have about climate change and conservation?

Alejandro Grajal I published an online book called [Climate Change Education: A Primer for Zoos and Aquariums](#).

Marilyn Strickland Okay.

Alejandro Grajal And it is, I believe it's accessible on on several platforms. I-Tunes has it.

Marilyn Strickland Okay.

Alejandro Grajal And others, Lulu which is another E-publication. It's free.

Marilyn Strickland Okay.

Alejandro Grajal And it was our attempt to present everything that we know about climate change for particularly for zoo and aquarium practitioners. How educators in this field can not only understand the problems of climate change but also how to overcome barriers and how to engage people in conservation behaviors. So that that was a kind of, an edited volume that we did it on purpose. For to reach a very accessible community.

Marilyn Strickland So one more time. What is the title again?

Alejandro Grajal Climate Change Education: A Primer for Zoos and Aquariums.

Marilyn Strickland All right. So you heard it here. Look it up. Take a read. So, let's talk about Woodland Park Zoo, specifically. So as part of your strategic plan, which you helped steward, it really does involve an increased focus on creating empathy for nature and understanding how people feel emotionally towards animals. And so, there's really this emotional connection that humans have with animals. And that empathy and that emotional connection can drive people to want to take care of the environment and to be more responsible. So talk about what you've seen in how zoos have evolved in this way? And also share with us, what do you think zoos of the 21st century will look like?

Alejandro Grajal That's a little light question. part of my research over the last decade and a half or so has been that the visit to the zoo is a very deep, emotional visit. It is deep in many respects. One of them is that almost nobody comes to the zoo by themselves. They always come with loved ones or friend ones or aspirations. I mean, it's a great dating destination. Because you know, you can be noncommittal about you know, a visit to the zoo. But then, of course, you see these animals in real life. And these animals are behaving in unscripted ways.

Alejandro Grajal So that authenticity also creates an amazing, emotional and deep connection to that. And of course, zoos tailor their collections to drive that emotional connection. So, you know we have gorillas and giraffes. And really spectacular animals that elicit those emotions. Because to tell you the truth, we could have snails. And we actually have snails and insects. But perhaps not as deep as you know as a baby gorilla.

Alejandro Grajal So, what we need to understand is, 'Do we capitalize that emotional connection?' And we know that empathy is very strong behavior emotion that drives a lot of human behavior. Basically, we project other creatures' feelings and needs into our own. And we're able literally in a psychological way to walk in their shoes. So, with empathy for animals, we know it's a very important precursor to understand the plight of these animals. And what you can do. Because literally, you're put in the shoes of these animals. So empathy for animals is an important discipline. And we have not only a very significant research component for that, to understand how these emotions drive behavior, but also a lot of practice. So, for the last year or so, we've been hosting a network of 20 zoos and aquariums from across the nation. And think tanks and universities. To understand how empathy drives conservation behaviors. And how can we facilitate those behaviors through the connections with animals and the connections with each other?

Alejandro Grajal And I think that that is, in a sense, a really strong foundation for us to talk about the zoo of the 21st century. It's a zoo where you define the mission of the visit to the zoo as a place to change the world.

Marilyn Strickland No, and that's really fascinating. You know. To your point about you know, I think for most people, you think of a zoo as a place where you have animals on display and you look. But what you're talking about is really a deeper mission that can create this emotional bond and help you know, improve and drive human behavior. So I want to talk a bit about something that I read online when I was doing research. So organization that we all know PETA, they said something to the effect of that, you know, zoos have outlived their usefulness. And you know, what you just said pretty much contradicts that. How do you respond to that assertion?

Alejandro Grajal Well, there is quite a movement. I have to first of all acknowledge that there is an ethical tradeoff in zoos. And for, for the longest time, zoos have said no, we do it right. And we do it well all the time. That would be a little arrogant, I would say. Because evidently, everybody's learning and everybody's trying to improve. And everybody's trying to make better use of what we're doing.

Alejandro Grajal I think for these groups, they have as much passion for animals as we do. The question here is, what are we doing to make the planet more livable for animals and people?

Marilyn Strickland For all species.

Alejandro Grajal For all species. And in my case, I chose that, to me the higher ethical question. I'm not taking for granted the discussion that we have about animal welfare. Let me just say that we are deeply committed to that. That we provide, for example, the best health care for our animals that is possible in modern world in fact. I would dare to say that probably our animals have better health care than many Americans. Every animal has a daily checkup. We have an on-staff nutritionist. We have an on-staff physical therapy. We have a whole branch of geriatric medicine. Our animals are living well beyond their natural stage. So for example, we just lost a gorilla at 51 years old. Gorillas in the wild rarely lived over 22 years old.

Alejandro Grajal So our animals are getting basically in age brackets that was never heard of in the wild. And of course we had to create new medical procedures like hypertension for primates. Which you know, nobody knew how to do that. But I think, beyond the care that we're taking for our animals, the question is why are zoos for?

Marilyn Strickland What's the purpose of the zoo?

Alejandro Grajal I think the role of the zoo, in addition to having a great, green space where people can emotionally connect with animals and each other. Which is critical in a city like Seattle. We're just growing in a basically, an urban jungle. But also at the same time, how do we empower people to be active participants in the future of, the environmental future of the planet?

Alejandro Grajal And to me, there's a big distance between asking that question in a video game or a TV program. And asking that question in a very active, emotionally-driven.

Marilyn Strickland Visceral.

Alejandro Grajal Visceral. Fully sensitive environment. Where you are not only looking at it but you're smelling it and you're, you're feeling it. And it comes through all your senses. I would dare anybody to find that kind of deep, emotional experience and not react to it. So the zoo of the future it is a zoo that is committed to create a movement that helps save the planet.

Marilyn Strickland Thank you. So, when we think about zoos. You know, people often say, well this is my favorite animal. People arrive already with favorites, and they know which exhibits that they want to see. How does Woodland Park Zoo decide which animals to host? How do you decide who you have there as your guest?

Alejandro Grajal It's funny you ask because it's not like there's an Amazon for elephants or a Walmart for gorillas.

Marilyn Strickland Right.

Alejandro Grajal Really, you cannot buy these things. And in fact we don't even bring them from the wild. That's something that most people don't know. 99 percent of the animals in zoos do not come from the wild. They're being four or five up to ten generations away from their ancestors. And these are animals that are bred collectively among all accredited zoos and aquariums.

Marilyn Strickland So these were like babies born in other zoos and that's how you.

Alejandro Grajal Yes.

Marilyn Strickland OK. Interesting.

Alejandro Grajal And we share all these collections. So we do fairly sophisticated genetic and demographic modeling to maintain not only the genetic diversity but the behavioral and sexual diversity of these animals all across North America.

Marilyn Strickland Interesting.

Alejandro Grajal So our collection is not defined by only what we want. But what we're able to breed and keep. And husbandry and actual care. So, many animals, almost all of the animals, are collectively bred as meta populations. So our collection is defined by the willingness of the accredited community, 230 zoos across the country, that really are committed to a viable, sustainable population of these animals.

Marilyn Strickland Interesting. I am guessing that a lot of our listeners did not know that.

Alejandro Grajal And in addition to that, about a third of the species that we breed are species that are critically endangered. For which we are now the safeguards of those species. So for example from the California condor to the black footed ferret, these animals would have gone extinct if we were not to save them in zoos. And now back reintroducing them in the wild. And that has happened to close to 350 species around the world from Oryx to condors. We're reintroducing those species in the wild.

Marilyn Strickland Interesting.

Marilyn Strickland So, when we think about zoos, you know we think about the collections. We think about the visitors. We think about the animals. And just the lesson you gave us about how you sustain the species. Let's talk about the business of the zoo. So, when you think about how the zoo is funded, you know how much comes from public resources? How much do you raise through philanthropy -- through membership? Just talk about the business model of how you keep a zoo like Woodland Park going.

Alejandro Grajal Right now, the zoo has an annual budget of about 44 million dollars. Of which a little less than a third, about 28 percent, is public support, mostly from the taxpayers and voters from King County and City of Seattle. About another third comes

from philanthropy. That is donors, foundations, etc. And then a little over a third is our business operations. So we run a fairly sharp business operation that includes parking, food, merchandise. And of course concerts, catering. You know, parties, outgoing services, consulting, et cetera. So it's a, it's a fairly sophisticated business operation too.

Marilyn Strickland So when you talk about the funding from the public sector. Is that through the parks districts or is it?

Alejandro Grajal Yes.

Marilyn Strickland OK. So it's through the parks.

Alejandro Grajal Yeah. So for example, we get a significant amount from King County Parks Levy. Which by the way, it's coming up in August. So I'm going to put the plug for that in August.

Alejandro Grajal We have a King County Parks Levy that supports the zoo but supports also the aquarium. And your favorite park in King County from Marymoor all the way to you know south, and all your trails up to my Cougar Mountain, et cetera. I think it's a great benefit for the, the inhabitants of King County to have these open green spaces. And then of course, another significant part is we derive a portion of our operation funds from the Parks District. The city of Seattle. So those two are really important and we try to make sure that we remain as accessible and open to everybody in King County.

Marilyn Strickland That's great.

Alejandro Grajal So, we talked about the business of running the zoo. And you talked about the different ways you raise revenue and your funding sources. But let's talk about the zoo as an employer. Because with a \$44 million a year annual budget, it means you employ quite a few people. And I think for folks who don't understand the complexity of a zoo, give us an idea of the variety of types of jobs that are actually at Woodland Park Zoo.

Alejandro Grajal That's funny you ask. Because most people say, I would love to work at the zoo. Because they think that all of us that work at the zoo, all we do is feed the animals and clean the animals. But the reality is it's a miniature city. Really you have an administration department. You have accountants. You have web designers. You have cinematographers. Horticulturists, keepers, biologists, field scientists and so on.

Marilyn Strickland Marketers, photographers.

Alejandro Grajal Yeah, communications. Writers, et cetera, et cetera. So it's almost 400 full time employees. In the summer, we hire close to 700 seasonals. We have almost a thousand volunteers. And we even have offices in four countries. So in a sense, it's a a huge variety of people, all around.

Marilyn Strickland So you know, we talked about the visitors to the zoo. And clearly this is a regional asset. But the city of Seattle and the region, we do big tourism business. So talk about the tourists that you attract.

Alejandro Grajal probably about 20, 22 percent of our visitors come from out of town.

Alejandro Grajal And that means out of town from south of Tacoma all the way to Hong Kong.

Marilyn Strickland Right.

Alejandro Grajal It's funny, because now one of my big discoveries of coming to Seattle is that people have a huge mental barrier crossing bridges. So, you know we're just six miles away from the cruise terminal. But for people to come over Lake Union and come to the zoo, it's like a huge barrier, which is crazy to me. So we don't get I think the share of tourism visitors that we should. We're starting with Downtown Seattle Association and Visit Seattle. We are creating partnership with a cruise industry, to make sure that we are more visible to the out of towners.

Marilyn Strickland And I think that's really important, because I know that there are some cities where you know, you visit and you make a trip to the zoo because that is an attraction.

Alejandro Grajal Yeah.

Marilyn Strickland So there's an opportunity here with the tourism we have in Seattle to really leverage that and get more people to Woodland Park Zoo.

Alejandro Grajal Yeah, and thanks. We'll plug for that.

Marilyn Strickland Good. Can you talk about the work you're doing to be more sustainable as an organization?

Alejandro Grajal It is our commitment as an institution to really be sustainable as possible and reducing our ecological footprint. It's one thing to talk about conservation. It's another when you're actually achieving it through our own your own operations. So we, for example eliminated plastic straws 20 years ago and we just eliminated single use plastic bottles last year. And in addition to that we've had over 10 years of composting half of our waste-stream. And we produce a very selective product called Zoo Doo, which is our brand for a zoo composting, that is one of the best garden fertilizers in Seattle. People line up for that. So we're truly committed to that. We just, two years ago, we launched electric charging stations and so on. So we're always committing, you know our carousel runs on solar, solar energy. So we really are really creative about making sure that our footprint is smaller every year.

Marilyn Strickland That's great. So you know, we live in Seattle and the region. And we are known as a technology and innovation capital. So talk about how technology has an impact on the zoo operations.

Alejandro Grajal Well being in Seattle is almost impossible not to, isn't it? But one of the things that I think is most exciting is that technology has fantastic opportunities for our near future. Particularly in conservation. So we partnered for example with Oculus. It's a subsidiary of Facebook, that is creating kind of cutting-edge, virtual reality experiences. So this was the first time that a zoo actually scripted a 360-video with Oculus. And we created all the learnings that we had from our empathy for animals project and translated the empathy for animals into a 360-video virtual reality program.

Alejandro Grajal It's a very interesting program because it is the perspective of the rhinos from within the exhibit. Which is one of those things that you can only do in virtual reality. Because I don't recommend being in an exhibit with a rhino.

Marilyn Strickland Not a good idea.

Alejandro Grajal Not a good idea. But this was a unique perspective and basically creating that empathic link with this almost dinosaur-looking animal. So that was a fantastic experience.

Marilyn Strickland You talked earlier about wanting the zoo to be accessible to the community. And we know that, you know in a place like Seattle, in the greater metro area we talk about access as a very important value. Can you talk about some of the human services organizations you partner with and how you are in fact making the zoo more accessible?

Alejandro Grajal Yeah. We really want to make sure that those, those segments of society that that have actual needs still are not facing barriers to experience the zoo. So we call it the community access program. We partner with over 600 civil society organizations, social service organizations. For example, Mary's Place that has been serving the homeless community. We have a very strong partnership with them in terms of visiting. And not only visiting the zoo, but also we come to visit their shelters. But in addition to that, we created specific targets where we are going to dedicate our energy. Special needs community with last year, with Special Olympics, we launched a very significant program to make sure that the zoo is accessible to people of all abilities. Of course the homeless community which is important for us too. Particularly in the winter season. Where we are supporting that, and we also launched last year a very important front with veterans and military service personnel. And this year in May, May 18, we have an event for All Cultures. And that is important for us. To also provide a platform for the amazing cultural diversity that exists in our region. So a place, a day where we're going to have different dances and food and cultural events, highlighting the rich diversity of our region.

Marilyn Strickland Excellent. Well, you are having an amazing career and doing really good work here in Seattle. One of the things that I like to do for our listeners is just talk about career advice. So you know, for someone who is young and considering what to do for a career -- and they're thinking about biology and wildlife. What advice would you give them about entering this field and this profession?

Alejandro Grajal Well, follow your passion. Really don't give up. And study hard. I mean it's like any other technical career. You really have to work hard at it. Nobody is born with it. So for a young person in high school, you know, do a lot of math and a lot of writing. And a lot of reading. But I also want to remind everybody that you don't have to be a biologist to work with animals or to save animals.

Marilyn Strickland That's true.

Alejandro Grajal We have very strong architects and lawyers and doctors and designers that are really doing amazing work in their own professional careers for conservation. So if you really want to have animals in your hands, perhaps biology. But if you want to save animals, many, many creative avenues to save the planet.

Marilyn Strickland So I'm going to switch gears a bit and you said creative avenues. So we're going to do what I call the lightning round or the get to know you better. So what, tell us about what you're listening to. What's on your playlist?

Alejandro Grajal I'm an omnivore. I listen to just about everything. Perhaps on the low end, rap. I don't hear much rap. On the high end, probably classic and jazz. But everything in between. I'm a musical explorer.

Marilyn Strickland That's very good. So you're really, really busy like a lot of us. But we always find time to watch a little television. So whether it's binge-watching something or your favorite series. What are some of your favorite television shows?

Alejandro Grajal I just. I just finished watching The Umbrella Academy in Netflix. And I don't know if it's for everybody, but I really enjoyed the Umbrella Academy.

Marilyn Strickland Yes. Okay I have to go look that up now.

Alejandro Grajal A fantasy superhero series, but that was fun.

Marilyn Strickland That's very cool. So tell us about artwork or photography hanging in your home. Are there any artists that you really love a lot?

Alejandro Grajal Yeah many but. I'm also a fairly busy artist myself.

Alejandro Grajal So most of the walls around my house are my own paintings. And I do mostly watercolor and acrylics. I have a website if you want to look.

Marilyn Strickland And what is it?

Alejandro Grajal Grajal.art. How convenient. And of course you can see some of the art there. So the walls are surrounded by my art. My wife and my daughter, who are also artists.

Marilyn Strickland A whole family of artists.

Alejandro Grajal A whole family of artists. And then we also have friends or we have sculptures from friends, and paintings from friends, that live in the art community.

Marilyn Strickland That's great. So because of your background and what you do, I can't resist asking this question. what is your Patronus?

Alejandro Grajal So I'm always in awe of a creature called the collared forest falcon.

Marilyn Strickland All right.

Alejandro Grajal You can Google that, too.

Marilyn Strickland OK. But why does that resonate with you?

Alejandro Grajal It is a very inconspicuous falcon of the tropical rainforest that is capable of catching and subduing animals that are twice its size.

Marilyn Strickland So really low-key, sometimes underestimated, but incredibly fierce.

Alejandro Grajal Yes.

Marilyn Strickland Ladies and gentlemen, I think that wraps up our interview. Thank you so much for being here today, Alejandro. Again, Alejandro Grajal – who is the president and CEO of the beloved Woodland Park Zoo.