



# LOTUS OUTREACH

## INTERNATIONAL

We recently connected with visual artist, philanthropist, and writer [Nancy Hilliard Joyce](#) to talk about her commitment to educational access and women's rights, as well as the role these themes have played in past and current creative projects.

**Lotus Outreach:** Over the years, you have given generously to our [Lotus Pedals](#) program, which provides bicycles to marginalized young women in rural Cambodia so that they may have reliable transportation to regional schools. How did you find Lotus Outreach initially, and what drew you to the Lotus Pedals program in particular?

**Nancy Hilliard Joyce:** I suppose that it was very serendipitous. In the Fall of 2014, I was in my office sitting in front of my computer screen. I think it was around 2am and I was looking for inspiration on Pinterest. I had been painting women with long dresses on bicycles for a while and was fascinated with the wheel as my subject matter. Then, I ran across a Susan B. Anthony quote, the one where she spoke of bicycles emancipating women more than anything else in the world. She talked about the feeling of freedom, self-reliance, and untrammelled womanhood. It struck me at that moment that the bicycle was the original vehicle to freedom for women. I continued down the "Pinterest pigeonhole" and then ran across a little girl from Cambodia holding a hand-drawn picture of a bicycle. Underneath the photograph, I learned of her connection to Lotus Pedals. That same night, I contacted Lotus Outreach International, did some quick research and immediately pledged to give 10% of the proceeds from my next show to provide bicycles to young girls in Cambodia. I decided that I would have an art opening a year from that time in October 2015.



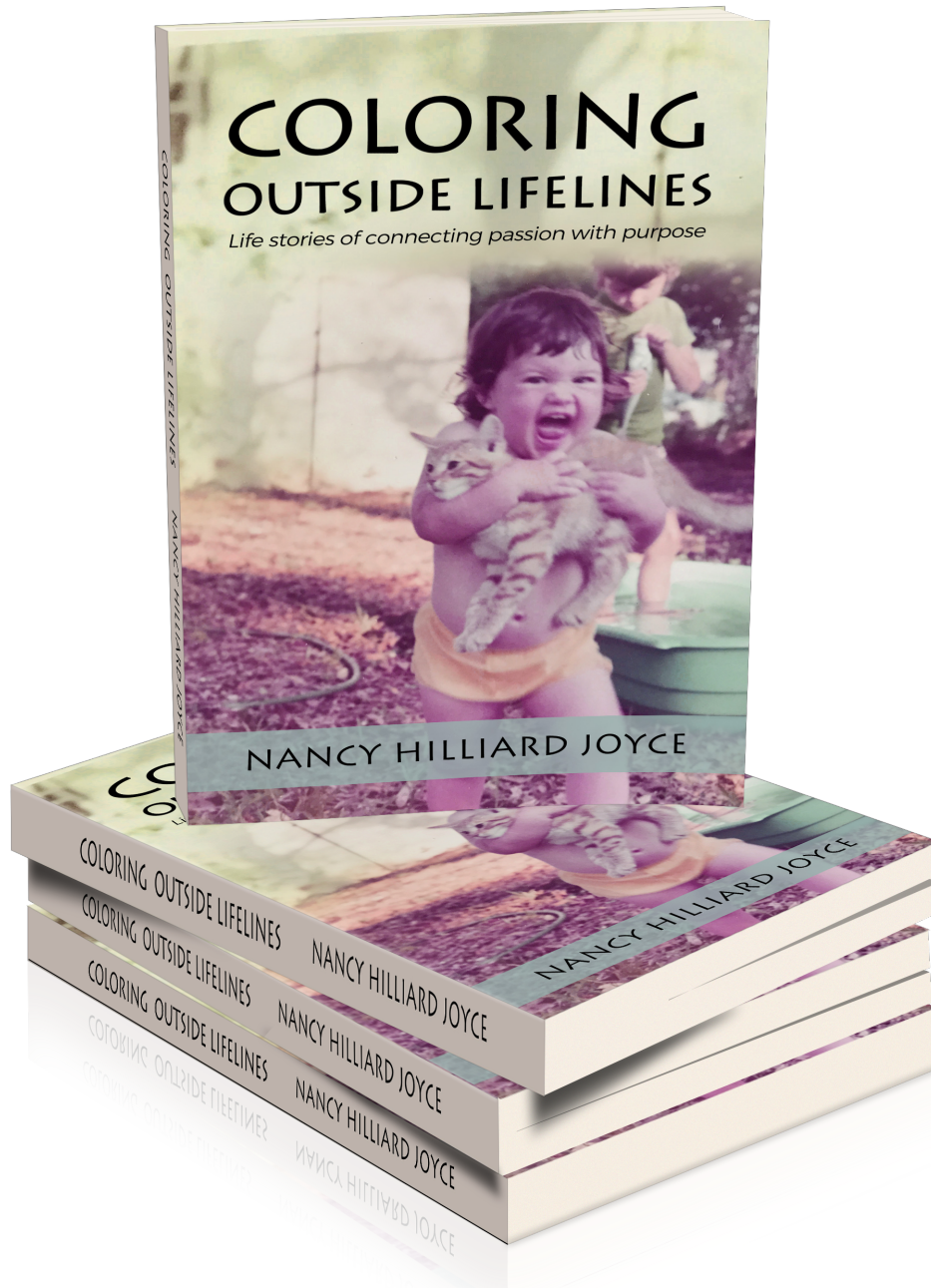
**LO:** In 2015, you traveled to Cambodia to attend a bicycle donation ceremony and meet some of the young women whose educations you helped to facilitate. What were some of your impressions and takeaways from that experience?



**NHJ:** Traveling to Cambodia was one of the most humbling and life-changing experiences of my life. I was overwhelmed by the surroundings of the country and the kindness of the people. I think Cambodia gets some negative press and is one of the greatest hidden treasures of the world. Obviously, there is a lot of poverty and underprivileged families but I saw such opportunity there to create change and help women. I thought of Susan B. Anthony when I was there and considered the fact that Cambodia was several hundred years behind the position she was in during the late 1800's. Education was at the forefront of my mind during the visit and it reinforced the powerlessness of life without an education.



**LO:** You are now in the final stages of publishing a memoir, *Coloring Outside Lifelines: Life Stories of Connecting Passion with Purpose*. Can you tell us more about how that project came about?



**NHJ:** Originally, the memoir was not intended for public consumption. Something hit me when I heard Julie Lythcott-Haims speaking at our children's school. Julie is a New York Times bestselling author of *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Over-Parenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. I began writing in February of 2017 with the idea of leaving detailed stories of my childhood to my children. My book took on a whole new meaning about six months into my writing journey. The entire book is about both my education and life-learning experiences. It has stories of my failures (and there are many) and how I eventually turn them into successes. In essence, I write about how I went from a passionate child to a purposeful adult. It is now a piece that I believe parents with overly passionate children will pick up and enjoy. I think the things I endured will surprise many people. It gives anecdotal life-lessons and it unfolds truths of how falling down can ultimately make us stronger. We all have a story to tell but I decided to tell mine through the lens of education.

**LO:** We understand that your work with LO holds a place in *Coloring Outside Lifelines: Life Stories of Connecting Passion with Purpose* as well. How does your experience with Lotus Pedals tie into the themes of the memoir?

**NHJ:** Absolutely. Lotus Pedals does hold a place in *Coloring Outside Lifelines*. Towards the end of my book, I talk at length about my time spent in Cambodia. As I mentioned above, it was a humbling experience to see these girls wanting an education so badly in order to change the course of their lives. The extreme measures that they are continually taking in order to get to school is both empowering and heart-wrenching. The risks these young girls take walking miles and miles on busy roads to school made me realize just how privileged I had been in own life. There was never a threat to me or my family that I would work in rice fields or tend to my home just so we could have food on our table. I am one of three girls in my family and my parents prioritized education, even before they had any money to afford it. Our public school systems allowed us to get an amazing start. I rode my bike to school several miles until I reached middle school but I was never afraid for my life or my safety on my journey.

**LO:** What lessons do you hope to impart to your readers in sharing your story?

**NHJ:** I hope that a few things come to light. First, we are all blessed to live in the United States. Even the poorest of families are given the opportunity to educate their children. Second, I hope that if overly-passionate children read my book they will see how an education can be lost on them if they don't take advantage of our unalienable right to be educated in the first place. Third, my wish is that if parents of overly-passionate and under-focused children read *Coloring Outside Lifelines* they will see some hope in their children and realize that all is not lost. There are ways to redirect them, it just takes time and patience. Finally, my ultimate purpose is for my children to see that giving back to others is much more rewarding than receiving things. A life's purpose is the true answer to happiness.

**LO:** You are also a well-known and prolific visual artist and are in fact installing two large-format murals in South Carolina's Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport on April 26th. Can you describe those works and what inspired you to create them?

**NHJ:** Thank you! Yes, I will be installing two, large-scale triptych pieces into the GSP airport. These pieces will be permanent installations and each will span over 15' x 6' feet across two separate walls. These works are both very contemporary and of women on bikes. I've had these drawings in the works for several years but am only now getting the opportunity to display them for the public. I am hopeful that these two paintings will be inspirational pieces that speak metaphorically about "taking flight".

**LO:** What do you hope travelers will feel when they see your murals?

**NHJ:** Because of their large-scale format, I simply hope that travelers will notice their bright colors and contemporary design. The detail is fascinating. As travelers walk past them, light will be reflected off of the pieces at several different angles. At the very least, I hope to make people feel less stressed and more energized as they depart or arrive the airport terminals.

**LO:** Now that you are wrapping up two major projects, more or less simultaneously, can we ask what's next for Nancy Hilliard Joyce?

**NHJ:** Oh, I have a lot of things up my sleeve. Bringing awareness to those in need is my ultimate purpose but my next series will do this in a different sort of light.

**LO:** Finally, what advice would you give to young writers and artists? And what advice would you give to aspiring philanthropists?

**NHJ:** I don't even know if I consider myself a writer quite yet. However, the advice I would give to anyone about their passion is to find purpose. My belief is that passion needs to come first and we all have it inside of us. Whether it is cooking, dancing, gardening, stamp-collecting, writing, painting, etc. we all have a passion for something. I would say to start *doing* rather than just thinking about doing. Day by day, just 15-minutes a day. Start and see where it takes you. Put in the time, make it a priority and keep at it. To the philanthropists out there, what goes around comes around. Just like the wheel or circle of life. The more you give the more you receive, it's cyclical. And, I thank them.



Nancy Hilliard Joyce is a Greenville, SC native, living and working from her home studio in Concord, NC. For more information about Nancy's artistic and philanthropic endeavors, visit her [website](#) or Instagram account, @NancyJoyceArt.

To support our Lotus Pedals bike donation program, or any of Lotus Outreach's other projects serving the women and children of rural Cambodia and India, click [here](#)!