

# FELLOWS LIST

*Japan-U.S. Science  
Communication & Policy  
Fellowship Network*



## 2022/2023



# SANDRA ATEHORTUA-BUENO

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## PhD | Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Sandra L. A. Bueno received her B.A. in chemistry from University of Antioquia under the direction of Prof. John Jairo Fernandez. She also interned with Prof. Luis Echegoyen at the University of Texas at El Paso. She then moved to Indiana University where completed her Ph.D degree in 2021 in chemistry as a NSF Graduate Research Fellow under the tutelage of Prof. Sara Skrabalak. Recently, she joined the research group of Dr. Emory Chan at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory as a postdoctoral fellow where her interests focus on the use of combinatorial and high-throughput colloidal synthesis of semiconductor nanoparticles to evaluate their physical properties.

# MOHAMED (MOE) ATWA

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## PhD Researcher | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University

Mohamed "Moe" Atwa (He/Him) is a final-year materials science Ph.D. candidate in the Quantum Materials Science Unit (QMSU) at OIST. Prior to his Ph.D., Moe collaborated with colleagues to establish all instrumentation in the then newly-minted QMSU. Moe studies how heat and electricity move through a 2-dimensional magnetic material called "chromium telluride". This material is a candidate for next-gen computer memory devices that more closely mimic the architecture of the human brain and are anticipated as key catalysts for the AI revolution. Moe has a B.Sc. from Egypt, an M.Sc. from Sweden, and soon, a Ph.D. from Japan, making him a global citizen, through and through. Outside of the lab, Moe has given science demos at grade schools on some of the remotest islands in the Japanese archipelago. Moe was also a digital ambassador for Swedish higher education with the Swedish Institute and is an occasional freelance sci-comm writer.

# LILIAN AZER

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## PhD Candidate | University of California, Riverside

Lilian Azer is a PhD candidate in the Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience area of the Psychology department at the University of California, Riverside. Before attending UCR, she received a Master of Arts degree in Clinical Psychology at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Currently, at UCR, Lilian studies working memory, attention, and cognitive control in older and younger adults. Specifically, she is interested in investigating the interaction between motor and cognitive functions given that motor and cognitive action rarely take place in isolation. This work investigates the effects of effortful physical exertion on cognitive control and working memory across multiple domains.

# SARAH D. BOBARDT

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## PhD Student | University of California, Riverside

Sarah Bobardt is a PhD Candidate in the Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics program at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on the role of endocannabinoids in host-pathogen interactions, using a model of hookworm. While completing her PhD, she has been a TA for ten courses, and it is in the classroom that she first discovered her passion for science communication. She began learning about how to connect academic research to public policy when she took UC Riverside's Science to Policy course and is now one of the co-chairs of the student cabinet. She is looking forward to connecting with her classmates in the program and hopes to use the skills gained in the course to prepare for a future career in science policy. When she isn't in the lab, Sarah enjoys a good cup of coffee and a book.

# MARCY CAGE

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## 3rd Doctoral Candidate | College of Medicine, University of South Alabama

Marcy Cage is a 3rd year PhD student at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine in the Center of Lung Biology. She currently studies the effects of climate modified air pollutants on the respiratory outcomes of adolescents. Through her work she also focuses on the socioeconomic factors that will influence air pollutant exposure leading to respiratory disease. Marcy has Bachelors in Sociology, Masters in Biological Sciences, and a Masters in Public Health. She is a native of Louisiana and loves to travel.

# MILES DEFORGES

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## PhD Student | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University

Hi, I'm Miles (they/ he). I'm a fifth year PhD student at OIST. My research involves imaging the release of neuromodulators noradrenaline, dopamine and serotonin in the cortex. My experiment compares how these neuromodulators are differentially involved in different aspects of reinforcement learning. While at OIST I have become involved in many clubs and activities including Eco club, dancing ballet, salsa and hip-hop, ultimate frisbee, documentary screenings and LGBTQ events. I have also learned a lot taking on various roles in the Student Council. Prior to coming to Okinawa I lived in Osaka for two years as a teacher, working with everyone from young kids to retirees. I grew up in London and did my undergrad in neuroscience at Bristol. I am greatly interested in social issues especially relating to diversity, equality and climate change.



# YUNA HATTORI

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**PhD Student | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University**

My name is Yuna Hattori (She/Her). I'm a PhD student at OIST and I am finishing the degree this autumn. My research is in fluid mechanics; I study the interaction between thin film fluids and the ambient air experimentally, numerically, and theoretically. Beyond film-air interaction, my work relates to a broader class of flows over dynamic boundaries, e.g. ocean-air interactions. I want to use my fluid mechanics background to move into climate modelling in my next position, and hope to contribute to the IPCC. Before pursuing the career in science, I was trained to be a ballet dancer in Tokyo. I taught ballet at OIST for the last few years and we also participated in Dance your PhD contest by Science and AAAS, in which we became one of the finalists.

# MICHAEL IZUMIYAMA

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**PhD Candidate | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University**

I am Michael Izumiya, a Ph.D. candidate at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST). I was born in the USA and did my master's and undergrad studies at San Francisco State University. I am in the marine climate change unit at OIST, studying the effects of climate change on fishes. My research utilized unique sites such as shallow water CO<sub>2</sub> seeps at volcanic islands as natural laboratories to study the impact of climate change on fishes. These unique sites act as a natural analog to future ocean conditions under climate change and help us understand how organisms in this ecosystem may adapt to these extreme conditions. My hobbies include fishing, diving, and golfing, and I look forward to meeting everyone.

# TAKEHITO KAMATA

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## Assistant Professor by Special Appointment | Sophia University

Takehito Kamata, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor by Special Appointment and the Founding International Collaboration URA (University Research Administrator) affiliated with the Center for Research Promotion & Support at Sophia University. He conducts research on international collaborative research and involves in a wide range of international collaborative projects to promote internationalization in higher education across nations. As a member of an international honor society, he participated in the Collegiate Presidential Inaugural Conferences in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the January Inaugurations of the President and Vice President of the United States in 2009 and 2013. He was also the founding Co-Chairs of the East Asia Special Interest Group (SIG) in the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) from 2014 to 2018. His research focuses on the areas of "international research collaborations," "higher education internationalization," "science, technology, and innovation policy," "Japan-United States relations," and "research integrity."

# RUVI LECAMWASAM

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## PhD | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University

My name is Ruvi Lecamwasam, and I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Quantum Machines Unit in the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology. I research how to use quantum technology to make very precise measurements. I completed my PhD in 2021 at the Australian National University, during which I studied how information theory quantifies the ultimate precision of a general quantum sensor, and analysed a measuring device formed by levitating a mirror with a powerful laser. I am very passionate about teaching and outreach, and write about things I find interesting at [ruvi.blog](http://ruvi.blog). Currently I'm learning French and Japanese, and exploring Okinawa!

# ALBERT MUFUNDIRWA

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## Postdoctoral Researcher | Japan Synchrotron Radiation Research Institute

Albert Mufundirwa is a postdoctoral fellow at Japan Synchrotron Radiation Research Institute. He is in the Fuel Cell Materials Analysis Group, a member of the PEFC Analysis and Evaluation Platform supported by The New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organisation (NEDO). Albert specialises in XRD, micro-CT and small angle X-ray scattering techniques for the characterisation of polymer electrolyte fuel cell (PEFC) catalysts. He holds a bachelor degree in Fuels and Energy Engineering from Chinhoyi University of Technology. Got his Masters and PhD degrees at Kyushu University, Department of Hydrogen Energy Systems. His focus was on the development of non-PGM catalysts for the oxygen reduction reaction in PEFCs. Albert participated in several science communication competitions notably: he got a 1st Place Prize at the ECS PRIME 2016 PEFC poster session; 2nd Place at The Falling Walls Lab Tokyo; awarded President's Excellence Award at the Kyushu University Energy Week, among others.

# NATALIE LINTON

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## PhD | State Public Health

Natalie Linton works in state-level public health as an infectious disease epidemiologist. She obtained a PhD from Hokkaido University with a focus on infectious disease modeling in 2021. During the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic she volunteered with the COVID-19 Cluster Taskforce in Tokyo. Pre-pandemic, she also obtained a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from Oregon State University and a Master of Science in Public Health in Disasters from the University of Oviedo. Outside of public health, she enjoys mountaineering and canyoneering and hopes to continue exploring all the fun activities the outdoors has to offer. She also looks forward to staying connected with Japan both personally and professionally.

# AYŞE HARUKA OSHIMA AÇIKBAŞ

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PhD Student | Okinawa Institute  
of Science and Technology  
Graduate University

# WILLIAM MAKOTO OTA

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PhD Candidate | University of  
California, Riverside

William Ota (He/Him) is a fifth-year PhD Candidate in the UC Riverside Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Organismal Biology. He studies how urbanization and invasion are impacting rivers and streams, the species living within them, and how these species are interacting with one another. This work informs conservation efforts, ecosystem managers, water districts, and flood control efforts in the expanding urban areas of our planet. Before beginning at UC Riverside, William worked on invasive-native species interactions with Dr. Lee Kats at Pepperdine University and for United States Geological Surveys conducting stream surveys in the Santa Monica Mountains. William is Chair-Elect for the National Science Policy Network, an Associate Editor with the Journal of Science Policy & Governance, Chair-Elect for the Ecological Society of America Policy Section, and a member of UC Riverside Science to Policy.



# JAMILA RODRIGUES

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## Postdoctoral Researcher | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University

Jamila Rodrigues is a postdoctoral researcher in the Embodied Cognitive Science Unit at OIST, where she contributes as a qualitative researcher to the COVID-19 pandemic experience. She is a former dancer with extensive experience working as an anthropologist, doing ethnographic fieldwork in Europe, Africa, South America, and East Asia on embodiment, gender, religious studies, well-being, and selfhood. She received the Vice Chancellor's Scholarship for her DPhil in Anthropology and Islamic Ritual Studies at Roehampton University, UK (2014-2017). In 2020, Rodrigues was awarded a Great Sasakawa short trip scholarship to visit the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies (Kyoto), for which she also conducted preliminary fieldwork on Okinawan shaman's (yuta) embodied ritual experience. In 2022, Rodrigues was awarded a JSPS fellowship for her study on ikigai (生き甲斐), translated as "a purpose in life," to analyse Japanese women's narratives related to the role of the bodies in embodying ikigai during times of crisis.

# JENNA ROPER

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## PhD Candidate | University of California, Riverside

Jenna Roper is a 4th year PhD student in the Department of Bioengineering. She develops next generation sensors for small, rural farmers in developing nations in order to increase agricultural sustainability. She is interested in the intersection of science and public policy and aims to transition into policy upon the completion of her degree.

# COLLIN STECKER

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## **Specially Appointed Assistant Professor | Institute for Chemical Reaction Design and Discovery, Hokkaido University**

Collin Stecker is a Specially Appointed Assistant Professor in the International Planning Unit at the Institute for Chemical Reaction Design and Discovery in Hokkaido University, where he manages public relations and outreach for the institute. Collin earned his B.S. in Chemistry and Japanese at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his PhD from OIST in the Energy Materials and Surface Sciences Unit, where his thesis focused on next-generation photovoltaic materials called perovskites. He analyzed perovskite surface defects and device-relevant interfaces, providing fundamental insight that helps inform improved solar cell design. While at OIST, he developed the Okinawa Science Mentoring Program for local high school students, won the Falling Walls Lab Tokyo science communication competition, and ran the OIST Capoeira Club. He also served on the OIST Student Council and worked with the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity on a remote science mentoring program."

# MAKI THOMAS

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## **PhD Student | Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University**

I am a final-year Ph.D. candidate at OIST. I study mangrove ecology, specifically on population connectivity, aiming to gain knowledge for designing effective conservation plans. During my time at OIST, I have been involved in several outreach activities regarding the ocean environment and STEM. Before I joined OIST, I worked at an environmental consulting company in Okinawa, Japan. Some of the projects included population control of invasive species, monitoring soil runoff, and we also worked closely with American military bases. Most projects were unique to Okinawa's environment and international policies. Prior to that, I interned as a data curator in UMASS Boston. We worked with the state's environmental agency, monitoring water quality at several historical dam sites. My academic background is Environmental science with an associate degree in Journalism (both obtained in the US). Outside of that, I am a mother, wife, and co-owner of a local restaurant.

# AGNES VARGHESE

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## Science and Technology Policy Fellow | California Council on Science and Technology

Agnes Varghese (she/her) is a California Council on Science and Technology (CCST) Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), where she utilizes a data-driven approach to better understand the needs of California's counties and cities in the face of emergencies. She also currently serves the the Director of Data Analytics and Impact Evaluation at the Journal of Science Policy & Governance. Agnes earned her PhD and Master's in Developmental Psychology at the University of California, Riverside, where she studied how individuals can find strength in times or positions of difficulty. In her free time, Agnes enjoys attempting to cook Kerala food, binge-watching shows on every streaming services, and video editing.

# TIFFANY VICTOR-LOVELACE

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## Assistant Scientist | Brookhaven National Laboratory

Tiffany Victor-Lovelace an Assistant Scientist in the Imaging and Microscopy Group at NSLS-II. She obtained her Ph.D. in Chemistry from Stony Brook University in 2018. She is working on developing Lanthanide Binding Tags (LBTs) for protein imaging in cells and tissues using X-ray Fluorescence Microscopy for X-ray bioimaging research in health, biomaterials, and bioenergy. She is using these LBTs to visualize aggregates of misfolded protein in a cell culture model for Lou Gehrig's disease. In the future, these LBTs can be used for nanometer resolution imaging of proteins within cells. Victor-Lovelace's other research involves exploring nutrient distribution in plant-fungi systems and examining copper involvement in Cerebral Amyloid Angiopathy. She is passionate about science education and DEI in research. She enjoys participating in science outreach and communication because it gives her the opportunity to interact with and inspire other young scientists and the wider public.



# KATHERINE YANAGI

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## Postdoctoral Fellow | Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center

Katherine (Katie) Yanagi is a postdoctoral fellow at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center. She grew up in Honolulu, Hawaii, did her bachelor's in biology at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, and completed her PhD in Neuroscience at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. As a graduate student, she worked on the genetics of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and other age-related neurodegenerative diseases. Currently she's working on protein homeostasis, focusing on the regulation of the proteasome. Katie is interested in how dysregulation of the proteasome occurs as organisms age and how the proteasome function is perturbed in degenerative diseases and cancers. Katie is also involved in the student/postdoc advisory committee at Fred Hutch where she works to improve the environment for trainees. While not in the lab, she loves to cook and spoil her cat.

# EMILY G. YANG

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## PhD Candidate | University of Michigan

Emily Yang (she/her) is a graduating PhD student at the University of Michigan in the department of Climate and Space Sciences and Engineering. She just defended her dissertation, which focused on evaluations of urban carbon dioxide emissions with the use of satellite observations. She also completed a Graduate Certificate in Science, Technology, and Public Policy. While at UM, Emily has been active in other policy-related activities, such as attending the UNFCCC 24th Conference of Parties and bringing lessons learned back to campus. She has also been involved in science outreach, participating in the UM Museum of Natural History Science Communication Fellowship and volunteering with the Graduate Society of Women Engineers to encourage elementary and middle school age girls to enter into STEM fields. She also helped organize an on-campus interdisciplinary environment and sustainability conference. Emily plans to transition into a climate policy career after graduating.