



2024-2025 Luce Scholars

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## 2024-2025 Luce Scholars

### **Esha Adnan**

*Age: 21*

*Pronouns: she/her*

*Field: International Development*



Esha Adnan, a first-generation Pakistani Muslim, is in her senior year at the CUNY Baccalaureate of Interdisciplinary and Unique Studies and Macaulay Honors Program. Dissatisfied with the confines of traditional majors, she took the step of crafting her own field of study—International Development and the Economy of the Oppressed. This unique interdisciplinary focus involves examining the intricate interplay between social norms and the trajectories of political and economic development across diverse regions.

Her journey into community organizing began during an internship at the American Civil Liberties Union, specifically in the National Political Advocacy Department. It was here that she grasped the pivotal role of community organizing in shaping policy proposals and effecting governmental changes. Inspired by this experience, Esha developed a campaign proposal aimed at curbing anti-Muslim bias within government-sanctioned surveillance programs. This initiative laid the foundation for her final thesis, a quantitative exploration of the contemporary surveillance measures and their impact on the political expression of the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities.

Esha's aspirations extend beyond national boundaries; her passion for international affairs and development stems from her upbringing in a family deeply entrenched in upholding gender roles within Pakistani society. This curiosity led her to Accra, Ghana, for a transformative study abroad program. While volunteering at community hospitals, she delved into the intricate ways cultural norms influence reproductive justice, as well as women's economic and political empowerment. The experience reinforced her conviction in the significance of community organizing, particularly when collaborating with advocates for reproductive healthcare reform who emphasized the necessity of understanding and respecting cultural influences.

Actively involved in the American Pakistani Advocacy Group, Esha serves as a vocal advocate for the rights of Pakistani and South Asian immigrants in the United States, maintaining a strong connection to her community. Beyond her academic and advocacy pursuits, Esha finds comfort in watching Bollywood movies and reading a diverse range of books, seamlessly escaping into the realms of fantasy during her leisure time. She is currently on the path to earning a BA from Macaulay Honors College, a BA from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a BA from CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies, all slated for completion in May 2024.

## Diogene Artiles

Age: 23

Pronouns: he/they

Field: Humanities (History, Language, Philosophy, Etc.)



Diogene Artiles is a Dominican American scholar and DJ from Bushwick, Brooklyn, where his love for music, language, and community engagement were born. His favorite parts of early schooling were music and language classes, so he chose to deepen his curiosity by studying Comparative Literature at Columbia University, where he concentrated on Portuguese and Lusophone cultures. He brought his love for global music to WKCR, the college radio, where he showcased independent Black and Indigenous artists from around Latin America. This would be the beginning of his career as a DJ, which has allowed him to cultivate safer spaces for social dance amongst queer people of color communities in New York City.

As a Mellon Mays Fellow and Laidlaw Scholar, Diogene conducted independent research that culminated in his thesis' engagement of space in the photography of Alvin Baltrop and Alair Gomes, which ultimately won the Catherine Medalia Johannet thesis prize. Diogene is interested in constructions of physical and imaginary space in queer media, the effects of Spanish and Portuguese colonial policy on kinship, relationship, and desire, and how unconscious biases are spread and sustained in subaltern communities. Diogene aims to tackle these questions by pursuing a PhD in Spanish and Portuguese Studies after his Luce year. Currently, Diogene is serving as an 11th Grade Program Coordinator of Enrichment Programs and Mentoring at SEO Scholars, a college-access program for underserved New York City students, of which he is also an alum. He oversees high school students' applications to pre-college academic and study abroad programs so that they, like we, can expand their horizons past the familiar. Ultimately, Diogene's engagement with community and music are intimately connected to his academic questions, and his mission is to use history and the archive to inform tangible community change. Diogene earned his BA in 2022 from Columbia University.

## Roger Burtonpatel

Age: 22

Pronouns: he/him

Field: Computer and Data Science



Roger Burtonpatel is a senior at Tufts University with a passion for languages: computational, musical, and spoken. He is pursuing a double major in computer science and music with a minor in Portuguese. In his computer science work, his research focus is on Programming Languages, and he has enjoyed using his programming skills at diverse internships, including as a developer at MathWorks and Bastion Zero and as a research assistant at Northeastern University's Music and MIND lab. Roger also engages with computer science as a tool for education and social good. Within Tufts' computer science department, he started TA'ing as a sophomore and now leads other TAs as a Teaching Fellow and was asked by faculty to instruct the department's TA training course. As a Tech Lead for JumboCode, Tufts' volunteer



service-oriented programming club, he guides developers in using their engineering abilities to benefit local non-profits. He is leading the team building an app for the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, one of Boston's foremost organizations for preserving green spaces. In recruiting developers, he ensured that the team's new hires were diverse, with over half women. He also developed the app for Potencia, a language-exchange program founded by Tufts alumni, and used his knowledge of Portuguese and French to gather and integrate feedback from local community members to make the app more accessible.

As a Tufts 1+4 and Global Citizen Year Fellow, Roger worked as a volunteer librarian in Brazil, where he became fluent in Portuguese and led an effort in gathering donations and pooling funds to prevent the library from closing. While there, he also taught free English lessons to adults through the library and drummed in several Brazilian musical ensembles, including an escola de samba and a bloco de maracatu. Back at Tufts, Roger used his position as a TA for Portuguese to work as an ally of the department at Tufts when the university proposed cutting the program. By bringing in the support of Medford's vibrant Brazilian community, he led a successful effort to keep Portuguese studies at Tufts and has since been involved in establishing it as a core part of the new Romance Language Program. Roger's passion for music has led him into a wide variety of ensembles at Tufts, including the New Music Ensemble, the Electronic Ensemble, and the Tufts Gamelan. In his free time, he enjoys playing ping-pong, hiking, and trying new recipes. Roger is set to graduate with a BA from Tufts University in May 2024.

## Giancarlo Ceja

Age: 22

Pronouns: he/him

Field: Environment (Climate Change, Conservation, etc.)



Giancarlo Ceja is a first-generation, Latine senior at the University of Southern California earning a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and International Relations, with a minor in Web Technologies and Applications. His passion lies within environmental justice, striving to create climate mitigation policy that protects the marginalized communities most susceptible to the climate crisis. This pursuit was spurred by his upbringing, growing up in a low-income migrant community in Southern California that was disproportionately affected by phenomena such as Urban Heat Islands (UHIs) and air pollution. This led him to be part of the second class of EH MATTERS fellows at the USC Environmental Health Center, where he developed an independent project analyzing the severity of the UHI Phenomenon in his home county of Riverside,

California. His focus on disadvantaged communities then led him to South Korea as a USC Global Fellow, where he assisted in the expansion of his company's air-purification technology to global south nations with severe air pollution.

Back at home in Southern California, Giancarlo has been active in coastal research and policy, conducting citizen science projects with USC Sea Grant and commenting publicly against harmful marine development through Heal the Bay. He also continues to be heavily involved in the federal government, first interning for the district office of Congressman Jimmy Gomez and currently serving as an intern for the U.S. Geological Survey, where he is currently organizing the first International Invasive Species and Climate Change Conference. During the Summer of 2023, he interned in the U.S. Department of Transportation

advancing environmental justice compliance and community aid programs, while also completing the in-person programming for the Humanity in Action Fellowship. This fall he was part of the USC Climate Justice Lab led by Dr. Shannon Gibson, where he researched the justice implications of climate financing at COP28 and interviewed key activists in the justice movement.

As a Gilman Scholar, Giancarlo will be conducting two independent research projects focused on eco-anxiety and coastal migration induced by climate change at the University of Queensland this spring. In the future, Giancarlo strives to earn an MPP and JD to continue preparing for a career in environmental policy, fighting for proper climate mitigation and community protection on the federal and international levels. Outside of university, he is an avid fútbol fan, music enthusiast, and the Clarinet Section Leader of the USC Trojan Marching Band! Giancarlo is on track to receive his BA from the University of Southern California in May 2024.

### **Awa Cisse**

*Age: 30*

*Pronouns: she/her*

*Field: Medicine*



Awa Cisse was born and raised in Dakar, Senegal. She embarked on a nursing career before immigrating to the USA in 2018. At Georgia State–Perimeter College, she discovered her passion for science and dedicated herself to mentoring underrepresented students in STEM. Awa graduated with an Associate Degree in Biology in 2021 from Perimeter College, the same year she was awarded the Jack Kent Cooke Transfer scholarship and received admission into Yale University.

At Yale, she is majoring in Molecular Biology and French Studies. She currently conducts research at Yale School of Public Health in the infectious disease department, where she focuses on effective treatments for malaria. Her career goal is to practice medicine in both the USA and Senegal, with a desire to enhance healthcare access in her birth country. Beyond her academic pursuits, Awa actively engages with communities, volunteering at local organizations, that focus on healthcare equity and access. During her free time, she enjoys listening to podcasts and cooking new recipes.

Awa earned an AS from Georgia State University and is on track to complete her BA at Yale University in May 2024.

## Saffiyah Coker

Age: 21

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Economics and International Development



Saffiyah Coker grew up in Dorchester, Massachusetts where she learned the value of community activism and the strength of the BIPOC community. Saffiyah is currently a senior at Tufts University where she double majors in Economics & International Relations. The majors align Saffiyah's passion for economic development in the global South as well as the ability to understand how systems of oppression result in economic disenfranchisement. Travel and exploration are hallmarks of how Saffiyah understands the world. Saffiyah spent her junior year at Tufts studying in Accra, Ghana for a semester with the School of International Training and then in London, U.K., for a semester at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Her time abroad began her research with female head porters in Ghanaian open-air markets—Kayayei. Through her work with Kayayei, Saffiyah began volunteering for Ilmiha Lab—a socio-behavioral lab based in Accra that aims to provide period education and intervention strategies to increase Kayayei's bargaining abilities and quality of life. In June 2023, Saffiyah returned to Accra, Ghana, to conduct solo research on the community and coalition building amongst the Kayayei. The fieldwork conducted has informed Saffiyah's future aspirations for a career in human-centered research. As well as a desire to explore public policy through an economic lens. At Tufts, Saffiyah is a part of the Tisch Scholars Leadership Development Program—a three-year leadership development program that combines coursework with fieldwork in the Boston area to analyze the root causes of social issues and enhance skill-building for social change. As a Tisch Scholar, Saffiyah has interned at the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and the Massachusetts Voter Table to learn how law and advocacy can merge to shape policy for marginalized groups. Cultural organizations such as the African Student Organization and the Black Womxn's Empowerment Conference have been mainstays of Saffiyah's undergraduate experience. For two years at Tufts, Saffiyah collaborated with the Africana Center to create the Black Womxn's Empowerment Conference—a two-day conference for all collegiate Black womxn in the Northeast. She is passionate about Black joy, community, and space-making. Saffiyah will graduate from Tufts University in May 2024.

## Sean Dunnington

Age: 26

Pronouns: he/him

Field: Dramatic Writing



Sean Dunnington is a queer Jewish playwright, screenwriter, and civic artist living between Manhattan and Honolulu. Raised in a rural cowboy town on Hawai'i Island, Sean taught himself how to belong by writing his own stories. Sean's work has been produced and presented Off-Broadway and in regional theatres nationwide, as well as libraries and galleries, state museums, public radio stations, and LGBTQIA+ centers. Select plays include "Authoritarian" (Tisch Goldberg Theatre), "The Children's Farm" (Magic Theatre), "Flat Fish" (LabTheatre), "Zap" (Lounge Theatre), "Small Minds" (The Worms), "Hawaiian Shake" (University of Redlands), and "The Undocumented" (Manhattan Repertory Theatre). Sean's award-winning debut feature film "My Partner" has premiered in over twenty festivals worldwide, including the Hawai'i International Film Festival, Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, and Beijing

Queer Film Festival. Sean has been in artistic residence with the East-West Center, Ka Waiwai Collective, The Orchard Project, and the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Center. He's been a fellow with the Dramatists Guild Foundation, Creative Labs Hawai'i, California Arts Council, LYRIC Center for LGBTQ Youth, National Collaborative for Health Equity, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Sean founded Tree Moss, the first-ever national collective for emerging Hawai'i playwrights, which supports and cultivates new Hawai'i plays. Sean's commitment to democratizing storytelling practices and frameworks has led him to facilitate over a hundred writing workshops and story circles for non-profits, public schools, and community centers across Hawai'i, including the Hālawā Correctional Facility, Matsunaga Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. Sean has returned to his hometown on Hawai'i Island every summer for the past decade as the Program Director of the Kahilu Performing Arts Workshop, an annual theatre arts education program dedicated to empowering Indigenous and low-income youth. Sean's belief in the expansive potential of playwriting extends beyond the stage to maps and communal healing processes. Sean has integrated playwriting with maps, crafting dozens of StoryMaps that visually depict queer belonging through narrative geography. He also actively contributes to Restorative Justice Initiatives, EDI Committees, and Racial Healing Circles, employing playwriting as a tool for individuals to voice their own narratives and foster mutual understanding amongst one another. Sean received his BA in Applied Playwriting from the University of Redlands' Johnston Center for Integrative Studies. He will soon graduate with his MFA in Dramatic Writing from NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

## Jocilyn Gilbert

Age: 31

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Environment (Climate Change, Conservation, etc.)



Jocilyn Gilbert is a Legislative Assistant in the U.S. House of Representatives striving to advance environmental, health and labor policy priorities. Her congressional career began as an intern for the late Congressman John Lewis and then she transitioned to full-time staff in his office. Since then, Jocilyn has worked on influential legislation such as the National Heritage Area Act, the National Defense Authorization Act, numerous appropriations legislation, and multiple recognition resolutions. In addition, in recent years, Jocilyn has advised on foreign policy matters and has penned multiple policy memos addressing human rights issues in Asia and Latin America. As a Congressional staffer, Jocilyn has participated in the Wilson Center Foreign Policy Fellowship program as well as the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Climate Crossroads Congressional Fellowship. Through these experiences, she has witnessed the legislative gaps in actively resolving the global climate crisis and therefore seeks to further engage in the intersection of foreign and environmental policy to be a catalyst for change at local levels.

Jocilyn earned a B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Spanish from Columbus State University. As an undergraduate student, she gained experience abroad in Mexico which ignited her interest in global affairs. While completing her Masters in Africana Studies at Georgia State University, she studied the experiences of people of the African diaspora in Jamaica and wrote her graduate thesis on the intersectional identities of race, sex, and profession. A lifelong learner, Jocilyn's free time is spent trying new recipes, reading autobiographies, and studying languages. She is very proud of her two-year plus Duolingo streak.

## Adriana Golden

Age: 20

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Medicine, specifically Psychiatry



Adriana Golden is a senior at Yale College majoring in English with a Concentration in Creative Writing. Her thesis "Affect, Consumerism, Media, and the Question of Art in Postmodern Novels" examines how postmodern authors defend the novel as a relevant art form in the midst of a commodified entertainment sphere. Her second thesis, "Despicable Narrators," is a collection of short stories exploring female bodily autonomy and questioning the mind-body problem. Adriana worked her way up from Staff Writer to Chair of The Yale Record, the oldest humor publication in America. As the 150th Chair of the Yale Record, she directed a major anniversary fundraiser while writing content and recruiting, training, and maintaining a staff of over eighty writers. She also

performs original sketches and stand-up sets for The Odd Ducks comedy group.



Adriana also brings her humor to the patients at Yale New Haven Hospital, where she interviews long term patients about their life stories and shares their narratives with their care teams as part of the Living History Project. She believes that clinicians should consider the total person and not reduce patients to their medical conditions. This mindset informs her work as a Psychoeducation Provider at the HAVEN Free Clinic. Adriana conducts anxiety coping workshops and performs mental health evaluations for recent immigrants to the U.S. In addition, she is a research assistant on a Connecticut Mental Health Center study about the perception of substance use disorder among Latin American patients. Her co-written abstract on this project will be presented at the College on Problems of Drug Dependence. Her prior research on the role of the PD-1 protein pathway in endometriosis has been published in *Fertility and Sterility*.

While she has worked in diverse sectors and locations, from television development in Los Angeles to chemical engineering in Tokyo, she plans to spend the rest of her career as a physician-writer. Adriana wants to conduct clinical research and treat patients in obstetrics and gynecology or psychiatry. She plans to publish novels and essays on medical ethics for readers inside and outside the field. For now, her fiction is forthcoming in the *Bellevue Literary Review*.

In her free time, Adriana can be found country western dancing, cooking for her family, subjecting her friends to her jokes, and explaining why Jane Austen is still funny. She will graduate with a BA from Yale University in May 2024.

## Emma Hotz

Age: 23

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Civil Society and Social Justice



Emma Hotz is a Chinese American adoptee from the East Mountains outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. She graduated from The University of New Mexico in May of 2022 with a BA in Political Science and Sociology. Emma played a pivotal role in establishing the Asian American Pacific Islander Resource Center (AAPIRC), which provides advisement, programming, and serves as a place of belonging for the AAPI UNM community. She remains connected to AAPIRC and continues to be an outspoken advocate for the community. She also created the Associated Students at the University of New Mexico (ASUNM) Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion position. As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, she created the ASUNM Emergency Scholarship Fund and served on Protect NM, a coalition to distribute personal protective equipment across underserved areas in New Mexico. This work led to her undergraduate thesis, which looked at how COVID-19 fueled anti-Asian hate through media exposure.

Emma has had the opportunities to work in and outside government, interning for the United States Congress, New Mexico State Legislature, Albuquerque Mayor's office, and the UNM Honors Research Institute. She also worked for a local home builder, and later worked for Pathways to Housing D.C. after becoming a Truman Scholar. She has more recently served as the Digital and Operations Director for Maggie Toulouse Oliver's New Mexico Secretary of State Re-Election Campaign and as the Digital Strategist for U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich.

Emma's vast interests and experiences have motivated her passion for service, providing basic needs to her community, tackling racial and systemic injustices, and fostering spaces of belonging. Her creative spirit allows her to fuse her digital marketing experience with new, innovative ways to tackle these challenges, and has inspired her commitment to work in social justice work as it intersects with art. With a passion from all things red to green chile, Emma plans to return to New Mexico to continue fighting against the inequities in her state. She also remains passionate about reconnecting to her culture and building spaces for the Asian-American community while she continues to develop her academic and career aspirations.

## **Jason Juang**

*Age: 21*

*Pronouns: he/him*

*Field: Environment (Climate Change, Conservation, etc.)*



Jason Juang is a climate change researcher and electrification advocate, interested in exploring how climate issues can be adapted to and mitigated on a local and international scale. He is currently a senior at the Georgia Institute of Technology pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a minor in Law, Science, and Technology and a certificate in Sustainable Business. Jason previously served as President of ElectrifyGT, where he led his peers to research, advocate, and educate in Georgia Tech administration for complete campus electrification, resulting in the electrification of campus landscaping equipment and police vehicles. Progressing his campus research on electrification, he is currently publishing a paper titled “A Multi-Scale Lifecycle and Technoeconomic Framework for Higher Education Fleet Electrification” in

Nature Scientific Reports so that other universities and similar organizations can achieve economic and carbon mitigation benefits from electrification strategies.

Jason has been recognized for his work on campus by winning the Campus Life Scholarship and as the sole recipient of the Dow Chemical P.C. McCutcheon Award for Outstanding Student Achievement, awards given to select undergraduates for significant campus impact and has worked extensively with campus administration in the development of Georgia Tech’s Climate Action Plan. After studying abroad at the University of Sydney and participating in Sydney’s Sustainability Program, Jason wants to dive further into international climate issues, focusing on climate vulnerability, modernization, and cultural views of industrial development. Jason’s long-term vision is to use grassroots organizations, including student voices, to advocate for climate solutions that are equitable and just for vulnerable communities.

In his free time, he is immensely interested in all types of volleyball and enjoys playing anywhere he can get his hands on a ball from open gyms in Atlanta, GA to concrete courts in National Taiwan University to grass volleyball in Sydney Park, Australia. Jason is on track to receive his BA from Georgia Institute of Technology in May 2024.

**Diana Kachman***Age: 22**Pronouns: she/her**Field: Medicine and Public Health*

Diana was born in San Jose, California to an undocumented Peruvian mother. They lived in a garage alone before CPS became involved. To avoid CPS, Diana was sent to Peru with her grandmother until her mother could afford an apartment. By the time she was five, she had moved to Washington State and met her stepfather, who became a real dad in every way. He taught her how to speak English by the time she entered kindergarten and fostered her love of books by reading to her every night. Diana spent her time with her grandparents before her grandmother succumbed to Alzheimer's Disease, which influenced her desire to work with the elderly. She remained close to her still-living grandparents, learning to love their stories and appreciate their individuality. One grandpa loved haggling at garage sales, the other was an avid Sudoku fan after a career as a math professor, and her grandmother loved outdoor adventures, including hiking and trying to catch crabs with her bare hands. Diana attended Seattle Preparatory School. During this time, she volunteered at a retirement home, won the Academic Award for Literature, and earned college credits from the University of Washington.

Diana left to attend Carleton College in Minnesota and felt deeply motivated to major in English while pursuing pre-health opportunities. She led the volunteer group Adopt a Grandparent as the Program Director, coordinated events and fundraising efforts as a board member of the Latin American Student Organization, and mentored within the Carleton Pre-Health Association. She worked as a CNA in Northfield at a hospital, a retirement home, and in-home care, learning about the differences in treatment. She discovered that she inherited a love for seeing new places from her mother, traveling to Alaska to intern as a Production Assistant, across the states between Northfield and Selma to learn about civil rights history, and to Ecuador to study traditional medicine and public health. She gained valuable research experience from her time in Ecuador, researching occidental and traditional medicine in the indigenous communities of Quito as well as from Seattle Children's Research Institute, studying behavioural parent training programs in underserved communities.

While at Carleton, Diana was awarded the prestigious Weitz Fellowship, securing her a yearlong role with the non-profit organization Autism Action Partnership (AAP) in Nebraska. Currently, Diana actively contributes to all of AAP's initiatives, with a primary focus on Project Lifesaver, aimed at reuniting children with autism who wander, with their families. Diana completed her BA at Carleton in June 2023.

## Susannah Lenaker (Anna)

Age: 26

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Environment (Climate Change, Conservation, etc.)



Anna is a lifelong learner, an author, and a proud first-generation student. She was born in southern California but has called many places home, including northern Mexico, northern California, Rhode Island, Connecticut, southern Mexico, England, New York City, and Solvang, California—a small town in central California wine country that’s modeled after a Danish village. She is currently pursuing her Master of Environmental Management at the Yale School of the Environment, specializing in climate change science and solutions. Previously, Anna received her Master of Public Affairs and Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Brown University.

Anna believes climate change and its disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations is the moral issue of her lifetime. She is committed to developing and supporting science- and place-based solutions to the climate crisis that are just and effective. Anna sees her degrees as working together to provide her with an interdisciplinary lens on environmental issues and their potential solutions. To work on a problem as wicked as climate change, one cannot think in a silo—it’s essential to bring together human values, political and economic systems, and science.

Anna spends a lot of time writing. Her first book titled *Able to Be Otherwise* is an account of her experiences and encounters with poverty, familial addiction, and climate change. With it, she contributes a personal and compassionate perspective to ongoing dialogues surrounding poverty, addiction, and climate change, and their solutions. Anna believes in the power of storytelling to move minds, inspire change, and foster community, and has experienced many moments of meaningful connection through sharing her story.

She’s written on the public health impacts of tropical deforestation with the World Resources Institute. And, through interviews with Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribal members, Anna has been learning and writing about the history and hoped-for futures of Indigenous water management on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming.

Thankful for the opportunities she’s been given, Anna has spent the last eight years helping students across the U.S. and beyond pursue their academic goals and apply to college. Anna is an avid reader, walker, and coffee drinker. She loves traveling to new places, sampling new cuisines, and watching *Jeopardy!*

Anna is a graduate of Brown University, holding a BA and MPA, and is currently pursuing her MEM at the Yale School of the Environment, set to graduate in May 2024.



## Nikhil Mandalaparth

Age: 26

Pronouns: he/they

Field: Civil Society and Social Justice)



Nikhil Mandalaparth is a writer, organizer, researcher and curator whose work has focused on promoting religious pluralism and social justice in South Asia and North America. Nikhil is a board member of Sadhana: Coalition of Progressive Hindus, and he curates Voices of Bhakti, a digital archive showcasing over 450 translations of South Asian poetry on religion, caste, and gender from 40 languages. He recently served as Deputy Executive Director of Hindus for Human Rights, and previously, with the Aspen Institute's Religion & Society Program, he helped launch a network of civic and faith leaders advancing religious pluralism across the United States. He has conducted quantitative and qualitative research at the World Bank, Stimson Center, and the University of Washington. As a journalist, Nikhil's writing has been supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, and he has been published in outlets such as Foreign Policy magazine,

Religion News Service, and Religion Dispatches. He has been quoted and interviewed by publications including BBC World Service, Al Jazeera, and the Huffington Post. Nikhil was born in Singapore, grew up in the Seattle area, and completed undergraduate and master's degrees in public policy at the University of Chicago. In his free time, he enjoys spending time in nature, trying out new recipes, and playing violin.

Nikhil obtained his BA at the University of Chicago in 2019 and a joint BA/MPP degree at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy in 2020.

## Neyha Naveed

Age: 24

Pronouns: she/her

Field: Music production & Engineering



Neyha Naveed is a first-generation American of Pakistani-Kashmiri descent from West Virginia. She is an interdisciplinary musician and writer interested in storytelling that empowers diverse voices and utilizes language as an integral tool for connection. She speaks Urdu, Punjabi, French, and Korean.

During her B.A. she led awareness campaigns for Kashmir and Uyghur Muslims, volunteered with the Appalachian Prison Book Project to donate reading materials to prisoners, and was awarded for her undergraduate research on gender-based violence in Japan and Brazil. Selected among the top 1% of her graduating class as a WVU Outstanding Senior, she has gone on to spearhead UN youth programs in the Global South, participate in a South Korean exchange as one of 8 American delegates recommended by U.S. Congress, and furthered her education on gender-climate studies through coursework from the UN Institute for Training and Research. While working at the World Resources Institute, Neyha implemented climate action strategies to over 60 partners, including the World Bank, City of New York, Harvard University, and IKEA. Her work has led her

to meet people from all walks of life: late-stage patients across rural Appalachia, UN ambassadors, North Korean refugees, and elementary school students in Pakistan, and strengthened her belief that everyone has a unique story that has the capacity to connect us more deeply with our own humanity.

From an orchestral background, she plays a variety of instruments and has mentored under Grammy-winning musicians and Recording Academy members. Neyha is passionate about removing industry barriers through open music education and ultimately aims to create an arts organization that re-envision the standard music label structure in favor of equitable practices and invests in the next generation through public arts programs. In her spare time, she works on a passion-project screenplay and uses her real estate license to explore architectural design.

## Yu-Shing Ni

*Age: 25*

*Pronouns: she/they*

*Field: Food and Agriculture*



Yu-Shing Ni is a first-generation Chinese American farmer, educator, and community organizer born and raised on unceded Tongva land (Los Angeles). She received her B.S. in Global Food Security and Ecological Agriculture from McGill University, on Kanien'kehà:ka territory (Montréal), where she led student organizations that educated and worked at the intersection of food justice and sustainable agri-food systems. During her studies, she was a research intern at the University of The West Indies in Barbados investigating the soil building potential of biogas effluent to support farmers' efforts to increase local food production on the island and in turn address the population's racial disparities in health.

Following university, Yu-Shing apprenticed on organic farms in Northern California and Central Oregon and encountered high demand for culturally appropriate foods that wasn't being met by local markets and food pantries. This prompted her to begin growing heritage crops for the local Asian & Pacific Islander community and host farm days where they shared seeds, intergenerational knowledge, and foods from across the diaspora.

Yu-Shing returned home to develop curriculum and lead Black Thumb Farm's Garden Education program in 2022, engaging BIPOC high schoolers around food sovereignty and growing food in LA. She managed the non-profit's urban farm in Panorama City, creating a safe space for BIPOC youth to engage with food and farming, and provided the multigenerational, multicultural community access to nourishing, culturally relevant produce, and a space to heal relationships with land. As a 2022 California Political Leadership Fellow with the National Young Farmers Coalition, she proposed policy recommendations to increase land and resource access for young BIPOC urban and rural farmers during USDA and CDFA's 2023 US Farm Bill meetings. She also published a zine sharing stories from California's API farmers and their cultural foodways and is currently collaborating on a national API farmer network and database.

Yu-Shing will pursue her MS/MPH to continue building cultural responsiveness into agri-food policy and programming. Her commitment to cooperative land stewardship, decolonizing food systems, and seed

saving with community drive her research interests in reintegrating indigenous crop species to meet dietary and cultural needs to strengthen community resilience, food sovereignty, and human and ecological health globally.

When not on the farm, you can find Yu-Shing in a kitchen—preferably an outdoor one—sharing meals and stories with friends, family, and neighbors and exploring her surroundings via hiking boots, climbing shoes, two wheels, and her bare feet.

## Warisha Siddiqui

*Age: 23*

*Pronouns: she/her*

*Field: Gender and Sexuality*



Warisha Siddiqui is the research data analyst at the Arab Barometer, where she disseminates vital findings from high-quality and reliable public opinion surveys in the Middle East and North Africa. She contributes to survey programming, data management, and data visualization creation in Arabic and English. Prior to the Arab Barometer, Warisha graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Tufts University in 2023. At Tufts, she studied the regional geopolitics and economy of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia, as well as the Arabic language. She believes in the power of civic action and is deeply passionate about advancing gender equity worldwide. Aside from academics, as a student worker for the University Chaplaincy, she promoted interfaith dialogue and events on campus. Furthermore, she organized around social and political issues facing the South Asia region and its diaspora through the Tufts South Asian Political Action Community (SAPAC). Warisha was the SAPAC treasurer, planning community events such as the annual academic symposium, speaker series, and teach-in workshops. She was also a member of Sigma Iota Rho, an honor society for International Studies. Previously, she held several positions at various U.S. Department of State offices, including the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues, and the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Warisha is a proud Pakistani American born and raised in New York City. She is a budding calligrapher and has enjoyed practicing Arabic, English, and Urdu scripts.

## Kirk Patrick Testa

Age: 26

Pronouns: he/they

Field: Curation, Museum Leadership



A curator, historian, and educator of art, Kirk Patrick Hilario Testa was born in the Philippines and, at eight, immigrated to California. Through QuestBridge, he majored in Art History and Philosophy at Vassar College. Kirk nurtured his community through leadership in the Office of Residential Life, Art Majors Committee, and Finance Committee. As Editor-in-Chief of the *Vassar Journal of Philosophy*, he published reviews of Giorgio Agamben's *Taste* and Joanna Zylińska's *Nonhuman Photography*. Studying abroad at University College London, organizing publication ephemera at Vogue House, and backpacking Europe for a month solidified Kirk's appreciation for visual culture.

Two Vassar fellowships allowed Kirk to continue studying in Europe. The Cornelisen immersed him in French culture and language in Lyon, and the Maguire facilitated Kirk's History of Art MA at The Courtauld in London. As Deputy Editor of *The Courtauldian*, Kirk interviewed Hans Ulrich Obrist and filmed highlights of the 2022 Venice Biennale for Bloomberg Connects. Honoring his roots, Kirk's dissertation scrutinized the Santo Niño de Cebu, a sixteenth-century Flemish statue of Christ transmuted into a Filipino icon. Supported by the Iberian and Latin American Visual Culture Group and the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, Kirk examined primary sources in Tagalog, French, and Spanish to discern how this relic remains a nexus of cultures and postcolonial discourse.

Beyond academia, Kirk has cultivated his passion for sharing art at six institutions. At the Loeb Art Center, he supervised researchers in the prints room, consulted Hudson River School sketches for *Past Time: Geology in European and American Art*, and condition-reported works-on-paper by Dürer and Rembrandt. He composed wall texts and helped stage ~100 paintings and sculptures for *Full Sun: American Women Artists Illuminate the Haggin Museum*. Kirk developed successful acquisition proposals for Latin American art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. For the Brooklyn Museum, he cataloged 800+ artist-zines, advancing the *Copy Machine Manifestos* exhibition and publication. In Venice, Kirk conducted public presentations on the history of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection and the *Surrealism and Magic* exhibition. At the Sotiris Felios Collection in Athens, Kirk's solo curatorial debut, *Poetics of the Ordinary*, explored still-life imagery through contemporary Greek art and public participation.

Last year, Kirk designed the International Baccalaureate Middle School Arts curriculum for his local school district. As Archivist and Curatorial Assistant at Gallery Wendi Norris in San Francisco, Kirk champions the legacies of luminaries including Remedios Varo and María Magdalena Campos-Pons.