

Name a Quasi-Moon

Meet the Panelists: Quasi-Moon Naming Contest

We're excited to introduce the brilliant minds behind *Radiolab* and the International Astronomical Union (IAU)'s [Quasi-Moon Naming Contest](#). With over 2,700 name submissions from 96 countries, our panelists carefully reviewed and rated each entry, bringing creativity, curiosity, and a love of the celestial to the process.

Special thanks to: Dr. Avery Denny, President of Diné Hataalii Association, Inc., Dr. Joseph Bruchac, and Jessie Fraser, Senior Communications Advisor of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.



Akihiko Tomita
he/him

Dr. Akihiko Tomita was born in 1967 in Osaka, Japan. He earned his Doctor of Science degree in 1996 from Kyoto University, specializing in astronomy and observational studies of galaxies. He began his academic career as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education, Wakayama University, in 1997, became an associate professor in 1999, and has been a full professor since 2010. He currently teaches at the Faculty of Education and the Graduate School of Teacher Education, where he focuses on teacher training.

Dr. Tomita's recent work includes developing astronomy education practices for young children, supporting school teachers anxious about teaching astronomy, and facilitating international collaborations in these efforts to promote global peace and friendship.

He is a member of the Steering Committee of Division C (Education, Outreach, and Heritage) of the IAU, Chair of the

National Astronomy Education Coordinator Japan team under the IAU Office of Astronomy for Education, and Chair of the Universe Awareness Japan team.

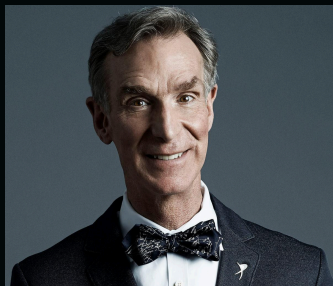
On a personal note, his wife is a plant physiologist, and his daughter is a university student studying law.



Alex Foster

Illustrator, he/him

Alex Foster is an illustrator from Margate, UK, who works from his home studio by the sea. He uses a layered, hand-drawn approach to create maps and illustrations for various uses, including websites, books, prints, clothing, and more. He is also the artist who accidentally renamed a quasi-moon to “Zoozve”!



Bill Nye

Science Guy

Bill Nye is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Planetary Society, a position he has held since 2010. As CEO, he provides vision and guidance, leads key organizational decisions, and serves as the public face of the Society. Nye is also widely recognized as "Bill Nye the Science Guy" from the beloved educational television series of the same name.



Celia Rose Gooding

Actor, she/they

Celia Rose Gooding stars as the iconic Uhura in the Paramount+ series *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, alongside Anson Mount, Ethan Peck, and Rebecca Romijn. The series is a prequel to *Star Trek: The Original Series*, following the crew of

the USS Enterprise under Captain Christopher Pike. Gooding received a Critics' Choice Award nomination for their performance.

Gooding recently wrapped production on *Breakwater*, an independent crime thriller written and directed by James Rowe.

Prior to their work in film and television, Gooding originated the role of Frankie in the Diablo Cody and Alanis Morissette Broadway musical *Jagged Little Pill*. At just 21 years old, they were nominated for a Tony Award for this role, becoming one of the youngest nominees in the Best Actress in a Featured Role in a Musical category. The production also won a Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album.

Born and raised in New York, Gooding continues to reside there.



Christian Elliott

Science Journalist & Audio Producer, he/him

Christian Elliott is a producer on NASA's audio team, where he creates the agency's flagship podcast, *Curious Universe*. His work on the show earned two 2024 Webby Awards for Best Individual Podcast Episode in the Science category and a Signal Award for Best Limited Series in Science. Outside of his work for NASA, Elliott is a freelance multimedia science and environmental journalist. He tells the stories of researchers working to better understand our changing world and has written for publications such as *National Geographic*, *Science*, *Undark*, *Hakai*, *Scientific American*, and *Smithsonian* magazines. His reporting, supported by grants from the Pulitzer Center, has taken him around the world—from coastal Alaska to Chilean Patagonia. Elliott holds a master's degree in science journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School. He began his career in audio production at public radio member stations, including WBEZ in Chicago.



Cintia Durán

she/her

Cintia Durán is a project manager working at the intersection of science, education, technology, and art. She leads operations at HackerGarage, a citizen experimental technology lab in Guadalajara, Mexico. She is also the General Director of Tloaque, an experimental science communication and research platform.

Additionally, Durán serves as the Educational Coordinator for Bibliotecas del Espacio, National Outreach Coordinator (NOC) for Mexico under the International Astronomical Union's (IAU) Office for Astronomy Outreach, and International Outreach Officer at the IAU's Office for Astronomy Outreach.



Eduardo and Ms. Haught

Student & Teacher

Eduardo ("Eddy") is a senior in high school with aspirations to create his own video game or gaming system.

Eddy and Ms. Haught are from New York City.



Elizabeth Landau

Writer/Producer/Multimedia Lead, she/her

Elizabeth Landau is an award-winning journalist and science communicator based in Washington, D.C. As a contractor, she serves as the Multimedia Lead for Astrophysics at NASA Headquarters. In this role, she produces and edits videos, writes website articles, and supports media activities for the Office of the Chief Scientist.

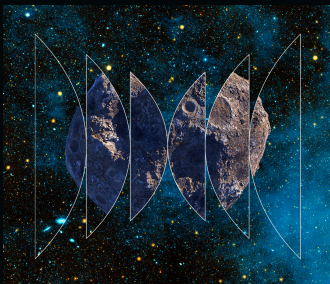
Landau is also a contributor to publications including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *WIRED*, *Smithsonian*, *Scientific American*, and *Quanta*. One of her favorite career highlights is participating in the "Zoozve" episode of *Radiolab*.



Emily Kwong
Journalist, she/her

Emily Kwong is the co-host and founding reporter of *Short Wave*, NPR's flagship science podcast, covering new discoveries, everyday mysteries, and the science behind the headlines. She specializes in stories intersecting sociopolitical history, family memory, and mental health. Through LAist Studios, Emily hosted *Inheriting*, a 10-part audio series exploring how pivotal moments in history shape family dynamics over generations.

Emily began her career as a youth media instructor at WNYC's *Radio Rookies* and as a daily reporter at KCAW-Sitka in Alaska, chasing stories from fishing boats to volcanoes for a community of 8,000. Her storytelling is grounded in empathy and context, driven by a desire to slow down and deeply engage with her subjects.



Gareth Williams
Astronomer

Gareth Williams is a semi-retired English-American astronomer and Secretary of the IAU Working Group Small Bodies Nomenclature. He previously spent nearly 30 years at the IAU Minor Planet Center in Cambridge, MA, tracking asteroids and comets, especially those that pose potential risks to Earth.



Hali'a and Ms. Sullivan

Student & Teacher

Hali'a is a 16-year-old from Oahu, Hawai'i. She spends her time canoe paddling, surfing, and working on Hawaiian restoration projects. With a deep love for the ocean and the environment, she is pursuing a future as a marine biologist to protect Hawai'i's unique ecosystems.

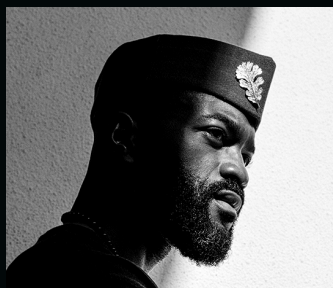
Ms. Sullivan is a Special Education and English Teacher in Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i.



Hermilla Félix

Student, she/her

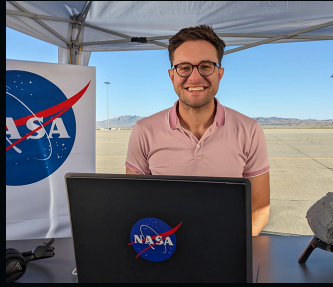
Hermilla Félix was born on September 15, 2005, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She is a Math-Physics student at Lycée Marie Jeanne and completed her primary education at École Nationale Foyer Social Rose l'Herisson. Hermilla is recognized for her keen interest in science and academic excellence.



Inua Ellams

Poet, Playwright, & Curator, he/him

Born in Nigeria, Inua Ellams is an award-winning poet, playwright, and curator. His work explores themes of identity, displacement, and destiny, blending traditional and contemporary styles. Inua's publications span several esteemed presses, and his storytelling is renowned for its innovative blend of mediums and genres.



Jacob Pinter

Senior Producer & Co-Host, NASA's Curious Universe

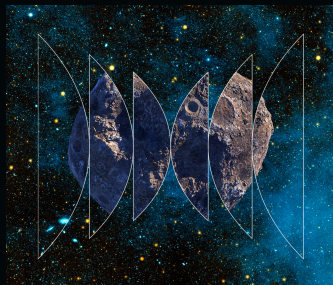
Jacob Pinter is a senior producer and co-host of NASA's *Curious Universe* podcast, guiding listeners through groundbreaking scientific discoveries, from dark matter to the James Webb Space Telescope. He has previously launched and produced celebrated podcasts such as National Geographic's *Overheard* and NPR's *Morning Edition*.



John Masken LAROSE

Professor, he/him

John Masken LAROSE earned a Licence degree in geology at the National School of Applied Geology (École Nationale de Géologie) (ENGA) and is a geology teacher at Lycée Marie Jeanne. He serves as the National Outreach Coordinator and National Astronomical Education Coordinator for the International Astronomical Union (IAU) in Haiti.



Kelly Blumenthal

Director, IAU OAO, she/her

Kelly Blumenthal holds a PhD in astrophysics from the Institute for Astronomy at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and an EdM in education policy and management from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. As Director of the International Astronomical Union Office for Astronomy Outreach (IAU OAO) at the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan, Kelly leads initiatives focused on developing inclusive and equitable programs to engage a global audience.



Latif Nasser

Co-Host, Radiolab

Latif Nasser is co-host of the award-winning WNYC Studios show *Radiolab*, where he has reported stories on diverse topics from snowflake photography to medieval robots and a polar bear's unique relationships. He also hosted *The Other Latif*, a miniseries about his Moroccan namesake who is a detainee at Guantanamo Bay. Latif is the host and executive producer of the Netflix series *Connected*, has given two TED talks, and holds a PhD in the History of Science from Harvard.



Lindy Elkins-Tanton

Planetary Scientist, she/her

Lindy Elkins-Tanton is a planetary scientist and the Principal Investigator of NASA's Psyche mission. She is also the Vice President of the Interplanetary Initiative at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on the formation and evolution of rocky planets and on effective teams and educational practices. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Elkins-Tanton's memoir, *A Portrait of the Scientist as a Young Woman*, was published in 2022 by William Morrow.



Magdalena Maszewska

Magdalena Maszewska began her astronomy journey in Toruń, the city of Copernicus. She has a background in observing variable stars and interstellar matter and has been engaged in science popularization for nearly a decade. Magdalena is a member of the Polish Astronomical Society and the editorial board of *Urania - Postępy Astronomii*. She coordinates visits and educational projects at the Aleksander Jablonski Foundation's Astronomical Observatory in Piwnice and is the National

Outreach Coordinator for Poland under the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach.



Major Attaway

Major Attaway is known for his role as the voice of Audrey II in *Little Shop of Horrors* and as the Genie in *Aladdin* on Broadway. He has also appeared in *Orange Is the New Black* and the film *Carter High*. Major's extensive voice acting credits include anime, video games, and narrations such as *Pokemon*, *Borderlands 3*, and *Dragonball Z Kai*. He is a Twitch affiliate and streams on his channel IPlayedMajor.



Maria Paz Gutiérrez

Associate Producer, Radiolab

Maria Paz Gutiérrez is an Associate Producer for *Radiolab*.



Michael Rudenko

After getting a degree in mathematics from MIT, Michael worked at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in the early 1980s in the high-energy astrophysics division processing data from an X-ray satellite. He moved to western Massachusetts to work at UMass Amherst on an infrared all-sky survey known as 2MASS. While there, he undertook a visual comet hunting program using his 6-inch refractor, with which he discovered three comets. He returned to the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in 2009, joining the Minor Planet Center doing system administration and software

development. He is also responsible for processing incoming comet astrometry, calculating their orbits.



Moiya McTier

Science Communicator, she/her

Dr. Moiya McTier is an astrophysicist, folklorist, and science communicator based in NYC. After graduating from Harvard as the school's first person to study both astrophysics and mythology, Dr. Moiya went on to become the first Black woman to earn an astronomy PhD from Columbia. Dr. Moiya has given hundreds of talks around the world, consulted with companies including Disney and PBS, and helped design science-art exhibits for museums and galleries. Dr. Moiya is the host of *Exolore* and *Pale Blue Pod* podcasts and the author of *The Milky Way: An Autobiography of Our Galaxy*.



Molly Webster

Science Journalist, she/her

Molly Webster is a science journalist and frequent guest host for *Radiolab*. She has written for *Scientific American* and *National Geographic Adventure*, and her work spans topics from international surrogacy to human life values. Molly is also the producer and host of *Gonads*, a critically acclaimed podcast and live event series.



Naomi Asabre Frimpong

Vice-President of the African Astronomical Society

Naomi Asabre Frimpong is a research scientist at the Ghana Space Science and Technology Institute, where she has made remarkable contributions to the field of astronomy. She obtained her PhD in Astronomy and Astrophysics from the University of Manchester. Her doctoral research at the University of Manchester's Jodrell Bank Center for Astrophysics explored the intricate dynamics Massive young stellar objects using complex organic molecules, including methanol and methyl cyanide.

Currently serving as the Vice President of the African Astronomical Society, Naomi also holds the position of National Outreach Coordinator (NOC) for Ghana under the auspices of the IAU Office for Astronomy Outreach. She Heads the Science Communication and Outreach efforts at GSSTI and is also an Executive of the Promoting Radio Astronomy in Ghana through School visits and Astronomy Clubs (PRAGSAG) astronomy outreach program, supported by the OAD.

Naomi is passionate about engaging with young minds and empowering them for STEM, particularly girls. She is committed to mentoring African students to inspire the next generation of astronomers across the continent"



Natalia Ramirez

Consultant, she/her

Natalia Ramirez is a consultant for Radiolab, specializing in storytelling across audio and music with a focus on social justice, accessibility, civic engagement, and representation. Her portfolio includes *Radiolab for Kids Presents: Terrestrials*, *The Experiment*, *Every Voice with Terrance McKnight*, *The NY Phil Story: Made in New York*, *Aria Code*, *The Open Ears Project*, and *UNDISTRACTED with Brittany Packnett Cunningham*, among others.



Pamela L Gay

Senior Scientist, she/her

Pamela L. Gay is an astronomer and technologist who focuses on using new media to engage the public in science. She leads citizen science projects at CosmoQuest.org and co-hosts *Astronomy Cast* and *Escape Velocity Space News*, aiming to bring the wonders of the universe to everyone.



Penn Badgley

he/him

Penn Badgley is an actor, director, producer and writer in television & film. Known most commonly for his roles in *Gossip Girl* and *YOU*, he has been working as a professional in media for over 25 years and is seeking to engage in discourses around the influence of media on young people, particularly in the area of love and relationships. Penn is also the co-founder of Ninth Mode, a production company which premiered *PODCRUSHED*, a podcast focusing on the period of adolescence as an opener to deeper conversations about youth and formative experiences.



Peter Veres

Peter Veres is an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and the Minor Planet Center, specializing in the study of asteroids and comets. He has discovered hundreds of asteroids and comets through the Pan-STARRS telescope and focuses on planetary defense and asteroid mining.



Regina G. Barber

Astrophysicist, Host and Reporter, Short Wave, she/her

Barber completed her PhD in physics at Washington State University with a focus on astrophysics, studying globular cluster systems. Before working at NPR, she taught physics and astronomy at Western Washington University, where she was also WWU's first STEM Inclusion and Outreach Specialist. During that time, she also hosted and was the Executive Producer of the podcast Spark Science, featuring interviews with STEM professionals. For seven seasons, she mentored a student production team in science communication and storytelling.

Barber spent her academic career combining racial and gender equity, science, and pop culture into one career. In 2019, she won WWU's Womxn of Color Empowerment Faculty Award. She is also an alumna of the SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science) Leadership Institute and a former Jackson Wild Media Lab Fellow.

She also loves TV, cartoons, and robots.



Salman Hameed

Founder & CEO, Kainaat Studios, he/him

Salman Hameed is the founder and CEO of the non-profit (501c3) [Kainaat Studios](#), that creates topical astronomy [videos in Urdu](#) for audiences in South Asia and in [English for broader Global South](#). He is also Charles Taylor Chair and Professor of Integrated Science & Humanities at Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts. He holds a Ph.D. in astronomy and is a member of the Five College Astronomy Department (FCAD). Science communication is his primary focus. Salman also has a weekly astronomy segment for New England Public Radio

(NEPM) in Massachusetts. Through Kainaat Studios, he also produces astronomy content aimed at kids in Pakistan and the broader global south. His writings have appeared in Dawn Magazine, Express Tribune, Science Magazine, and the Guardian.



Sarah Al-Ahmed

Science Communicator, she/her

Sarah Al-Ahmed's childhood passion for science fiction and astronomy set her on a lifelong mission to share her love of space with the world. She is now living her dream as the host and producer of *Planetary Radio* for The Planetary Society.

Sarah holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in astrophysics from the University of California at Berkeley. After working as a data-taker for a supernova research team using instruments at Lick Observatory in Mt. Hamilton, California, she moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in science communication. She spent six years as a museum guide, writer, and show producer at the historic Griffith Observatory. She was a monthly contributor to *Griffith Observer* magazine and a content creator for *All Space Considered*, the observatory's monthly astronomy news program.

Sarah joined The Planetary Society as Digital Community Manager in 2020, leveraging her science communication skills to cultivate its online communities. In 2023, she became the host and producer of *Planetary Radio*, The Planetary Society's weekly podcast and radio show. She continues to share the human adventure across the Solar System and beyond each week at planetary.org/radio.



Sarah Sandbach

Executive Director, Radiolab, she/her

Sarah Sandbach is the Executive Director of Radiolab, where she leads the show's strategy, revenue, and audience growth initiatives, as well as oversees podcast and broadcast operations. She also spearheads Radiolab's spinoff shows and special projects, serving as the Executive Producer of *Terrestrials*, Radiolab's first podcast for kids and families.

In her previous role at New York Public Radio, she served as Managing Director of Strategic Planning. Her early work in public media includes supporting acclaimed programs such as *On the Media*, *Two Dope Queens*, *Death, Sex & Money*, and *The New Yorker Radio Hour*. She also worked on the Webby Award-winning podcast *A Piece of Work with Abbi Jacobson*, a co-production between WNYC Studios and MoMA, and served as Executive Producer for WNYC's broadcast collaboration with The Public Theater, *Shakespeare on the Radio: Richard II*.



Sean Carroll

Professor

is the Homewood Professor of Natural Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University and a member of the Fractal Faculty at the Santa Fe Institute. He received his Ph.D. in 1993 from Harvard University. His research focuses on the foundations of physics, including quantum mechanics, spacetime, cosmology, and emergence. Sean is the author of several books, most recently *The Biggest Ideas in the Universe, Vol. 2: Quanta and Fields*. He has been recognized with numerous awards and fellowships, including from the National Science Foundation, NASA, the Sloan Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation, among others. He is also the host of the weekly *Mindscape* podcast.



Sindhu Gnanasambandan

Producer, Radiolab

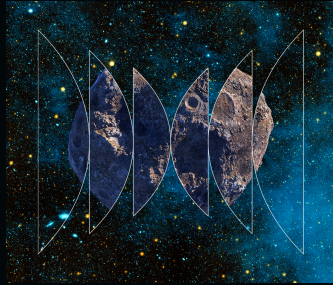
Sindhu Gnanasambandan is a producer at Radiolab who enjoys telling stories about how the human mind works. Before joining Radiolab, she created audio stories for The New York Times, Gimlet Media's StartUp, and NPR's Planet Money. In her free time, Sindhu enjoys biking, collecting paper clips for good luck, and cooking for her house of eight people.



Sofía Rojas

Postdoctoral Researcher, she/her

Sofía Rojas is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles. Originally from Colombia, she earned her bachelor's degrees in Astronomy and Physics at The University of Texas at Austin. She was selected for the International Max Planck Research School Fellowship to conduct graduate studies at the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy and obtained her Ph.D. from Heidelberg University in Germany. Sofía's research focuses on the evolution and physical characteristics of galaxies and supermassive black holes that existed when the universe was less than a billion years old. She specializes in multi-wavelength observations in optical, infrared, millimeter, and radio frequencies, using both ground-based and space-based telescopes. Sofía is also passionate about astronomy education, particularly within the Hispanic community and for students at all levels.



Thebe Medupe

President, African Astronomical Society (AfAS)

Thebe Medupe is the President of the African Astronomical Society (AfAS), a renowned South African astrophysicist, educator, and science communicator. He is celebrated for his groundbreaking work in astronomy and his efforts to make science accessible to underserved communities.

Thebe holds a Ph.D. in astrophysics and has taught at universities across South Africa and internationally.



Wanda Díaz Merced

Astrophysicist

Dr. Wanda Díaz Merced is an astrophysicist and a pioneer in sonification, the practice of converting astronomical data into sound. After losing her sight, she revolutionized the way scientists analyze the universe by making complex data accessible through auditory methods.

More about her work can be heard on *Radiolab's Terrestrials* episode [*The Unimaginable: How Gravitational Waves \(Literally\) Rocked Our World.*](#)



Wendy Zukerman

Executive Producer of Science Vs

Wendy Zukerman is an award-winning science journalist and the host and executive producer of the podcast *Science Vs*. She is also the co-author of a peer-reviewed academic paper on the phenomenon of "blue balls," titled *"Blue Balls' and Sexual Coercion: A Survey Study of Genitopelvic Pain After Sexual Arousal Without Orgasm and Its Implications for Sexual Advances."*



Yasmin Catricheo

Senior STEM Education Specialist

Yasmin Catricheo is a Native American (Mapuche-Chile) woman certified in physics education. She works as the Senior STEM Education Specialist at Associated Universities Inc. (AUI) in Washington, D.C., where she co-leads numerous STEM education projects and develops new initiatives.

Her work includes projects such as Innovators Developing Accessible Tools for Astronomy (IDATA), *Cosmovisions of the Pacific Rim*, *Big Astronomy: People, Places, Discoveries*, and the North American Office of Astronomy for Development (NA-ROAD). Yasmin earned a master's degree in education with a concentration in science from Universidad del Bío Bío in Chile and spent seven years teaching physics and natural sciences.

As a member of the MAPU TRAFUN association and being of Mapuche origin, she has dedicated the past decade to preserving and sharing Mapuche Indigenous knowledge. Yasmin is also the President and CEO of the Janequeo Foundation and holds leadership roles in international astronomy organizations.