



**Emerging
Leaders for
Climate Action**

2023



ELCA will host 4 policy tracks - which are aligned with COP28 - each track will have 11 participants who will be divided based on interests indicated in their application

- **Mitigation** - Developing and deploying new technologies to scale renewable energy and transform agri-tech, water use, and food production.
- **Adaptation** - Protecting our most vulnerable communities and our most critical systems from extreme weather and biodiversity loss. Ensuring global food system resiliency.
- **Financing** - Ensuring equitable access to climate finance. Increasing access to capital dollars and international financial institutions' resources.
- **Loss & Damage** - Supporting vulnerable communities rebuild after natural disasters. Building resiliency to the consequences that will arise from the unavoidable risks of climate change.



SHIVIKA AGRAWAL

PHD STUDENT, PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Shivika is an upcoming Ph.D. student in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program at Purdue University. She is the recipient of the highly competitive Lynn Fellowship, designed to recruit outstanding PhD-track students.

With an academic background in Sociology and Civil Engineering, she works at the intersection of Engineering, Environment, and Humanities, focusing on water issues. Her research interests include trans-disciplinary investigation of resilience in agricultural riskscapes through multi-level diversity with a focus on social dilemmas, environmental uncertainty, design of soft water infrastructure (governance regimes, literacy), post-normal science (knowledge-policy interaction), and integration-to-implementation sciences (i2S) approach.



ISTIAKH AHMED

PHD STUDENT, NORTH EASTERN UNIVERSITY

Istiakh is a Ph.D. student in Public Policy at the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University, Boston, USA. He has completed both his BSS and MSS in Anthropology from Jahangirnagar University. Before joining the Ph.D. program, Istiakh researched climate change adaptation and climate-induced loss and damage for seven years. He worked as an Advisor - Climate Adaptation at the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and was a Program Coordinator at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

He has followed the climate negotiation on the loss and damage track for five years and has attended three COPs. He co-led the loss and damage track in Glasgow Climate Dialogue and presented the recommendations at COP26 in Glasgow, UK.

Istiakh also attended the Resilience Academy and was a fellow of the USAID young researcher program. He has published several journal articles, working papers, research reports, blogs, and op-eds on climate change and its different topics. He also has presented his research work at many international conferences worldwide.



HANAN ALLEN

COLLEGE ACCESS ADVISOR, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Hanan is a recent graduate of Rutgers University Camden. She pursued her Master's in Public Administration with a concentration in community development. Her multifaceted background entails crisis intervention, youth mentorship, higher education administration, and international affairs.

She is passionate about implementing effective public policy that directly impacts humanity to build a more sustainable world for global citizens. Her service in the youth development sector at Peace Corps Fiji strengthened her advocacy for community engagement and prioritizing cultural diversity from the grassroots level and beyond. As a humanitarian advocate, she is excited to be a part of the ELCA team and collaborate with agencies such as the United Nations and the United Arab Emirates Embassy to build capacity and strengthen the social capital of global partnerships.



RUMER ALLEYNE-LEGENDRE

SENIOR LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Rumer is a native New Yorker and graduate of The City College of New York, where she majored in Political Science and minored in Philosophy. She currently serves as the Senior Legislative Assistant for Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez, handling a policy portfolio that includes environment/energy, agriculture, and natural resources committee work.

Rumer is particularly interested in environmental justice work and believes we must center the policy conversations on those most vulnerable to the harsh effects of the climate change crisis. She is passionate about public service at both the local and federal levels and hopes to continue making meaningful contributions to legislative work.



JEFFREY B. APPIAGYEI

CORPORATE LEAD, SAYETECH COMPANY LIMITED

Jeffrey Boakye Appiagyei is an agricultural technology entrepreneur from Ghana who has a deep-rooted passion for building sustainable agribusinesses in Africa and transforming society for the better. He has a background in Agricultural Economics and Engineering from the University of Missouri Columbia and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology respectively.

Jeffrey co-founded SAYeTECH Company Ltd, where he currently serves as the Corporate Lead. He has been at the forefront of developing groundbreaking agricultural machinery and innovations and plans to introduce small mechanized products onto the agricultural market, thus providing opportunities for increased productivity and efficiency in the sector.



ALIYA BAGEWADI

DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS,
ALLUME ENERGY

Aliya serves as the US Director of Strategy Partnerships for Allume Energy, a clean tech company unlocking rooftop solar for apartment renters worldwide.

She previously worked as a management consultant for Fortune 500 companies and in rural economic development in Southeast Asia. She studied political science and land economics at the University of Chicago and the University of Cambridge, where she was a Gates Cambridge Scholar.



CONOR BAKER

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR,
GUILFORD COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Conor Baker is the Operations Coordinator for Guilford County Emergency Management in Greensboro, NC; he holds a master's degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from Georgetown University, as well as a bachelor's degree in Fire Safety Engineering Technology from UNC Charlotte. Conor is an avid sustainability and clean energy advocate and believes that finding solutions to the climate crisis is the most pressing issue of our time. In his work, Conor focuses on emergency planning efforts for Guilford County, to include the cities of Greensboro and High Point; these projects include hazard mitigation planning and finding creative ways to make our communities more sustainable and resilient from natural and man-made hazards. Conor believes as the world grows and evolve economically, efforts should first and foremost be taken to address environmental impacts. Further, cities and governments can design sustainability and resilience into their urban landscapes, which will create a better environment for everyone to share and live.



JOHN "JACK" BOGER

FOUNDER, HUMMINGBIRD WARRIOR

Jack Boger is a social entrepreneur, political activist, and Marine veteran. He is the founder of Hummingbird Warrior, an emergent veteran service organization dedicated to helping veterans and their families heal from trauma through nature-based therapies and Indigenous ways of knowing. He is currently a graduate student at Yale University, pursuing a dual degree program in ecology and religion at Yale Divinity School (MDiv.) and Yale School of the Environment (MEM).

Previously he worked on biocultural preservation and Indigenous sovereignty projects with the Indigenous Medicine Conservation Fund and the Riverstyx Foundation. Jack continues to support Native American causes through his service on the board of the Allen Youth Center in Allen, SD on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, home of the Oglala Lakota people.



VICTORIA BORTFELD

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM MANAGER,
AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Victoria, is an environmental health professional with a deep passion for climate solutions that center on environmental justice, health equity, and community engagement, and she hopes to bring this intersectional lens into the climate policy space.

She currently advances environmental health and environmental justice work in the public health sector. She received her Master of Public Health in Environmental Health Sciences at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and her undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan.



JUSTIN BRIGHTHARP

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER,
SOUTHEAST ENERGY EFFICIENCY ALLIANCE

Justin Brightharp is a professional with seven years of experience in energy and transportation. He currently serves as a Senior Program Manager for the Southeast Energy Efficiency Alliance, leading the organization's energy efficient transportation initiatives. Justin's previous experience includes managing Atlanta, Georgia's electric vehicle fleet, deploying clean transportation projects across the United States, and co-founding a gardening technology company. Justin has a Bachelor of Science in Geosciences and lives in Atlanta, USA where you can find him gardening and enjoying the outdoors.



MARISSA BUFFO

MBA STUDENT, UCLA ANDERSON

Marissa is recently graduated with her MBA from UCLA Anderson where she focused on the intersection of finance and impact. While at Anderson, Marissa was involved in Anderson Venture Impact Partners, a self-sustaining student-led investment fund, as a director within the healthcare vertical and then as Co-President of the program this past year.

Marissa is also currently involved in research related to the stakeholder impacts of CA SB-1383, California's recent organics recycling and reduction regulation. Post-MBA, Marissa will study Azerbaijani as an awardee of the Critical Language Scholarship from the U.S. Department of State before starting a career in investment banking with a focus on sustainability.



HAILEY CAMPBELL

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CARE ABOUT CLIMATE

Hailey is a climate activist with a Master's in Sustainability Solutions and a B.S. in Sustainability from Arizona State University. As Co-Executive Director of Care About Climate, she empowers young people to be their best advocates in international climate decision-making spaces through education and training.

Additionally, she works for the City and County of Honolulu's Office of Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resiliency, designing O'ahu's Climate Adaptation Strategy. She works to empower global communities and youth to find their climate voice, turn their ideas into climate solutions, and see themselves as part of the solution to the climate crisis.



AARON CHAN

SPECIAL ASSISTANT, FEMA

Aaron Chan (he/him) works for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) within the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). He specializes in climate change, the Indo-Pacific, and youth engagement. He is a passionate advocate for diversity and youth representation and served as a representative delegate for United Nations' Young Professionals in Foreign Policy Tokyo at the 2023 UN Water Conference.

He focuses his volunteer time on empowering youth through mentoring and professional development as a member of the US-ASEAN Young Professionals Association and other Congressional Staff Associations, as well as serving as a mentor with the UCDC and CHIA program. In addition, through his work with ASEAN, he worked to help organize for the recent 2023 World Bank Group Youth Summit. He received his M.A. in International Affairs with a concentration in Conflict and Conflict Resolution from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs and his B.A. in Global Studies from UCLA in 2016.



AHMAD CHOUDHARY

LAW STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE

Ahmad is a 2L at the University of Baltimore, interested in international environmental law and foreign policy. During his Masters, Ahmad was a National Security Fellow with the State Department as his client, where he briefed the State Department INR, State Department Office of Pakistan Affairs (SCA/P) - Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, USAID, Department of Defense Joint Staff, Directorate for Intelligence (J2), and Naval Special Warfare Command (USNSWC), on climate mitigation and adaptation in Pakistan. He was also a legal intern for BowerGroupAsia, He has interned at the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, where he created a report on how climate change impacts women in the MENA region.

He has a BA in Political Science from Georgia State University, where he wrote an honors thesis on climate refugees. Ahmad also has a MA in Diplomacy and International Relations from Seton Hall University. Ahmad was a Critical Language Scholar studying Arabic through a State Department scholarship during this period.



GLEN CHUA

PHD CANDIDATE, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Glen is a climate scientist interested in atmospheric chemistry and science-policy interactions. He uses state-of-the-art climate models at Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (GFDL) to understand the composition of the atmosphere is responding to changes in emissions and the climate, and how it in turn, affects climate and human health. His current research interests are investigating the historical and future drivers of the atmosphere's ability to 'self-cleanse' itself of air pollutants and some greenhouse gases like methane. Through his involvement with the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs as a High Meadows Environmental Institute (HMEI) Science, Technology and Environmental Policy (STEP) Ford Fellow, he has also been able to explore the intersections between his scientific research and the policy world.

Prior to coming to Princeton, Glen grew up in Singapore, and subsequently obtained a BA and MSci in Experimental and Theoretical Physics as well as an MPhil in Atmospheric Chemistry from the University of Cambridge in the UK.



RAJJI DESAI

URBAN CLIMATE RESEARCHER-DESIGNER,
CBT ARCHITECTS

Rajji is a researcher and architect with a Master in Design Studies degree from Harvard GSD, where she focused on Urbanism, Landscape, and Ecology. Over the past three and a half years, she has worked as an Urban Climate Researcher-Designer at CBT Architects in Boston, where she served as a lead researcher in the Urban Design and Planning team.

She works on advancing climate change literacy through policy analysis, publication design, creative placemaking, and storytelling. As a former Research Associate at Harvard's Critical Landscapes Design Lab and a member of the Urban Theory Lab, she is skilled in geospatial, art-based, qualitative analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

Before joining Harvard, Rajji worked as an Urban Researcher at Columbia University's GSAPP Studio X, where she led and collaborated on projects spanning urban planning, art, and architecture. In 2015, she graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from Mumbai University's KRVA with the highest honors.



JIANING FAN

ENERGY MARKETS MANAGER, VOLTUS

Jianing Fan is an Energy Markets Manager at Voltus, and she specializes in New York and New England markets. Voltus aims to be the distributed energy platform that fulfills the promise of the energy transition, starting from demand response and exploring more. Previously, Jianing worked at Blueprint Power, a New York based startup aiming to connect real estate developers and energy management solutions. Jianing holds a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University.



BENJAMIN GUGGENHEIM

ANALYST, MACRO ADVISORY PARTNERS

Ben is an Analyst at Macro Advisory Partners (MAP), where he provides corporate and investor clients with strategic geopolitical, policy, and market insights (primary topics include: energy transition, emerging markets and international development, supply chains, Chinese affairs, and US domestic and foreign policy).

He graduated Phi Beta Kappa with departmental honors from Columbia University, where he studied East Asian Languages and Cultures and Business Management. Ben has previously interned at the Council on Foreign Relations, the Asia Society Policy Institute, and the Asia Society Northern California and worked as a research assistant to a professor at the university of Virginia Miller Center of Public Affairs.



KATHLEEN HILLERY

GRADUATE STUDENT,
UT AUSTIN LBJ SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Kathleen Hillery graduated from Gettysburg College in 2012 with a Bachelor's of Science in Chemistry, returning to New Hampshire to conduct research and development on medical devices. Transitioning from biomedical research to the United States Navy and nuclear engineering, she completed two sea tours—including three patrols in the Mediterranean Sea from 2015-2017 and an around-the-world deployment from 2018-2019—before leaving active duty in 2020. She maintains a commission in the U.S. Navy Reserve. Her experiences in the Mediterranean during a surge in attempted migrant crossings influenced her direction when transitioning to the civilian sector. Kathleen graduated in May 2023 with a Master's in Global Policy Studies and Security Portfolio from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas. At UT she earned the Brumley Fellowship from the Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law to conduct independent research on developing and communicating climate action solutions for policymakers.

Kathleen pursues opportunities to facilitate robust climate crisis action. By demonstrating a direct connection between climate change and national and international security, she seeks to develop humane policies for immediate implementation capable of acknowledging domestic state security concerns while meeting environmental metrics and the imperative of building community resilience while mitigating against and adapting to climate change.



LINDSAY HORIKOSHI

ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, CAMBER COLLECTIVE

Lindsay is currently an Engagement Manager at Camber Collective, a social impact strategy consulting firm, where she leads teams of management consultants on complex strategy, customer insights, and project management engagements. She has over nine years of experience supporting private sector, multilateral, and US government clients, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Global Fund, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Veteran's Health Administration (VHA), and Defense Health Agency (DHA).

She has experience working in Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Mexico, and Uganda. She has designed, implemented, and evaluated strategy and transformation programs in global health, military, and veterans' health, climate, and gender. Before joining Camber, she worked as a global health subject matter expert with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Inspector General.

Lindsay earned an MSc. in Global Health and a BS in International Health from Georgetown University and is a Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP). She also serves on the board of directors for the CORE Group, a global community health NGO. She participates in the Young Leaders program at a foreign policy think tank and volunteers with community organizations in the DC area.



LUCY HUMMER

CLIMATE & ENERGY RESEARCHER,
GLOBAL ENERGY MONITOR

Lucy (they/them) is an energy professional with refined research, policy analysis and communication skills. Utilizing a background in grassroots advocacy, they are interested in the intersection of energy, food and water justice. Since graduating with a Master's degree in environmental policy from the George Washington University's Trachtenberg School of Public Policy, Lucy has worked as a researcher at Global Energy Monitor tracking and reporting on the global fleet of coal-fired power plants.



CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

AIP SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY POLICY,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Christopher is an AIP Science & Technology Policy Fellow in the Office of Energy Programs at the Department of State, where he manages international technical assistance programs related to the power sector and critical minerals governance.

He also serves as the Workshops Director and sits on the Steering Committee of Engineers & Scientists Acting Locally, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the engagement of STEM professionals with local policy making.

He has previously served as the Western Hub Chair of the National Science Policy Network, an Associate Editor for the Journal of Science Policy and Governance, and a 2022 Clean Energy Leadership Institute fellow. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley.



CATHLEEN JEANTY

UNHCR INNOVATION FELLOW

Cathleen is currently a UNHCR Innovation Fellow; an editor within the Rising Experts program at Young Professionals in Foreign Policy; the Director of Communications at the Progressive Democrats of New Jersey; and a chapter co-coordinator at Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation's (WCAPS) New York chapter.

She sits in Emerge America's Young Leaders Cabinet and on The Black Policy Institute's Young People's Advisory Board. In the past, she was a public information editor at the United Nations, an Emerge New Jersey fellow, a stakeholder consultant on the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology's Global Digital Compact, an Obama Organizing Fellow, and the Media Coordinator at the Campaign for a National Presidential Youth Council. She also served two terms on the It's Up to Us Advisory board and was a delegate at the 2023 World Bank Youth Summit.



SABA KHALID

MANAGER, WEST MONROE PARTNERS

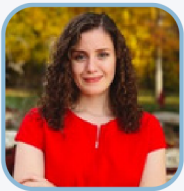
Saba Khalid currently serves as a Manager at West Monroe Partners as part of their Energy and Utilities practice. She has previously worked as an Electrical Engineering in the former GE Energy divisions, in roles ranging from service engineering to systems engineering. She has worked with utility clients across North America and with companies and teams all over the world. Her interest in climate change is not new, it is a byproduct of her work and focus in the energy field. She continues to develop her expertise in how to help communities and her clients prepare for the effects of climate change in their respective territories, while volunteering on infrastructure projects for vulnerable communities. It has been her passion to address and develop her talents in energy from an engineering and business perspective, and to fill the gaps, she has started working towards the policy area. She is ecstatic to join the Emerging Climate Leaders program where she hopes to grow her policy prowess. Saba holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Electrical Engineering Power Systems.



LAURA KOZUSZEK

CO-FOUNDER & LEAD CONSULTANT, ISLAND SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS

Laura is a strategist and consulting professional who enjoys working on complex problems such as the climate crisis. She has trained in various areas that have gained her a wide range of experience such as studying biology, working in disaster management, studying economics, being certified as an advanced open-water scuba diver, and most recently working in the sustainable agriculture sector. She is most passionate about climate issues and how our actions affect our relationship with the Animal Kingdom at large. She is most curious about how the natural/wildlife environment and the human world can co-exist.



NINO LAZARIIA

CONSULTANT, CLEANTECH GROUP

Nino is passionate about use of digital technologies for solving climate change problems. She works at the intersection of digital development and sustainable innovation. She has experience in intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank and different consultancy firms. Nino has extensive experience developing strategies, policies, and guidelines on national and city levels, conducting market research and country assessments, and managing projects. Nino covers such topics as Cleantech, climate tech, carbon & nature based solutions, digital, urban, sustainable development, smart cities, IoT, AI, data ecosystems and others.

Nino received her Master's in Public Affairs and Master's of Science in Environmental Science with specialization in International Development and Sustainable Urbanization from the #1 MPA Program at O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University.

Nino has diverse multicultural background living and working in several countries. She is fluent in several languages including English, Russian, Georgian. Nino is a multitasker and fast learner who loves to take on new opportunities and challenges.



TOSCA LICHTENHELD

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS LEAD, SOFAR OCEAN

Tosca Lichtenheld leads Sofar Ocean’s Government business. Sofar is an ocean tech startup that conducts ocean sensing and modeling, and helps the commercial shipping industry reduce carbon emissions through optimized weather routing. Tosca specializes in scaling commercial technology solutions for dual use by both the U.S. Government and the private sector, and in recent years has specifically focused on climate tech. Prior to joining Sofar, Tosca spent five years at Palantir Technologies, where she implemented commercial data integration and artificial intelligence solutions for the U.S. Government. Tosca graduated from the University of Chicago with a B.S. in Chemistry.



DYLAN MIBU

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, SANDS CAPITAL

Dylan is a Research Associate at Sands Capital, focusing on ESG, stewardship, and climate research. Before joining Sands Capital, Dylan worked in environmental and sustainability consulting at BSI.

Dylan earned a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He holds the CFA’s Certificate in ESG Investing and the SASB FSA Credential.



MANUEL NTUMBA

FOUNDER, TOD'AERS GLOBAL NETWORK [TGN]

Manuel Ntumba is a Congolese-Togolese inventor, geostrategist, climate advocate, and geospatial expert. He uses his expertise in satellite technology and geospatial intelligence to address climate issues and global development. Manuel Ntumba is the Founder of Tod'Aérs Global Network [TGN], a global public-private partnership [PPP], established with a vision to support global sustainable development, technological innovation, and socio-economic progress worldwide.

Manuel Ntumba holds an engineering degree with a specialization in satellite telecommunications and geospatial information. He also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) with a specialization in Digital Governance and International Economics from Porto Business School (Portugal). Manuel Ntumba is a YALI Alumni in Public Policy and Management. The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) is an initiative of the United States Department of State launched in 2010 by President Barack Obama.



YEJIDE OLUTOSIN

DIRECTOR, BUSINESS CLIMATE FINANCE AT
IMPACT EXPERIENCE

Yejide is the Business Climate Finance (BCF) Initiative Director at Impact Experience, a social impact non-profit/NGO. The BCF initiative seeks to decarbonize corporate bank accounts and employee retirement plans using a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) lens to advance racial equity alongside sustainability initiatives, starting with a group of leading U.S. companies.

Yejide holds a bachelor's degree from Howard University, where she participated in the Gilman Scholar program in Dakar, Senegal. She later served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, teaching Math in French and leading malaria awareness programming in Guinea-Conakry, West Africa.

After spending five years working with global energy sector stakeholders to increase energy access in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, Yejide pivoted to banking/wealth management at J.P. Morgan after earning an M.B.A. at George Washington University, where she was a Forté Fellow.

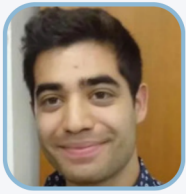


LINDSEY O'NEAL

DONALD M. PAYNE FELLOW

Lindsey O'Neal (she/her) is a Donald M. Payne Fellow, where she will be working in Congress under Representative Sheila Jackson Lee this summer, begin graduate studies in Global Environmental Policy at American University this fall, and pursue her dream career of being a USAID Foreign Service Environmental Officer at the conclusion of graduate school.

Originally from Palmetto, Florida, Lindsey has spent much of her career dedicated to public service and international environmentalism. During her undergraduate studies at West Texas A&M University, she worked with small organizations in Texas, North Carolina, and Mexico on climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives. As a Peace Corps volunteer, Lindsey worked with women farmers to adapt to severe drought in northern Botswana and harnessed a strong passion for addressing intersectional environmental challenges facing women around the world.



MARK ORTIZ

PRESIDENTIAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Mark is a scholar-activist and Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow at the Pennsylvania State University, where he researches global youth activism, climate change politics, and climate justice. The National Science Foundation has supported his research on youth climate activism, and his writing has been published or is forthcoming in Edge Effects, The Forge, and Climate and Development, among other outlets.

He is the creator and coordinator of the Global Youth Storytelling and Research Lab (GYSRL), a collaborative research ecosystem connecting academics, non-academic researchers, and youth advocates to amplify young people's perspectives, stories, and lived experiences in regions and communities most impacted by climate change and global injustice.

He completed his Ph.D. in Geography at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 2022. While in North Carolina, he became involved with the North Carolina Climate Justice Collective as a Leadership Team Member in 2016. He has also served as an expert panelist and consultant on topics related to youth engagement for IDEO and the U.N. Foundation and as a student organizer for the United Students Against Sweatshops as an undergraduate at the University of Alabama.



SYDNEY ROVNER

CLIMATE, ENERGY, AND INNOVATION TRAINEE,
DELEGATION OF THE EU TO THE UNITED STATES

Sydney has a Masters's Degree from Johns Hopkins University SAIS Europe in European Public Policy, specifically focusing on transatlantic relations and climate change policy. She has experience in EU sustainability policy in Brussels, the EU Delegation in the United States, and American foreign policy in Washington, DC. Her interest is in the intersection of national security, climate change, and climate finance.

She also has experience in the transatlantic Climate Policy and looks forward to expanding her climate knowledge through the ELCA program.



ANGEL SMITH

FULBRIGHT AWARDEE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Angel has a Master of Global Affairs from Rice University. Her research interests include US-Gulf Relations and Climate Statecraft. Angel's research focuses on how oil-producing Gulf states negotiate energy demands and their economic interests with domestic and global sustainability goals and objectives.

Angel also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Bachelor of Arts in International Studies degree from Colorado State University. Angel has also spent time living abroad and studying Arabic as a Gilman Scholar, Critical Language Scholarship Awardee, and Boren Fellow. Angel plans to continue studying climate statecraft this fall in the UAE.



S. EILEEN SOMA

PROGRAM OFFICER, JOHN SNOW INC

Eileen's career has focused on improving outcomes for vulnerable populations around the world. She has worked for public health and non-profit organizations on a wide-range of projects, including efforts to eradicate polio and promote vaccine acceptance. Other topics that interest her are MCH and food insecurity. For leisure, she enjoys being anywhere among trees and mountains.



POOJA TILVAWALA

FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, YOUTH CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE

Pooja is an Indian-American climate justice advocate, community builder, and youth engagement expert with 5 years of experience in the global climate movement. She has degrees in Economics and International Studies with a focus on Justice, Ethics, and Human Rights from American University. Since 2020, she has served as the Founder and Executive Director of Youth Climate Collaborative (YCC) which aims to create a more just, inclusive, and intergenerational climate movement that especially allows young people to take meaningful climate action while sustaining themselves and their initiatives.

She advises Rivet, which is creating the world's largest microgrant fund for youth-led action by harnessing youth purchasing power through brand/company partnerships. She is an active member of YOUNGO (the children and youth constituency of the UNFCCC), a member of the United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth (UNMGCY), and a Board Member of the Global Youth Storytelling and Research Lab at Penn State University. Her current work focuses on coordination to advance the SDGs, climate mental health, intergenerational decision-making, trust-based philanthropy, knowledge sharing from the non-Western to the Western world, narrative-based storytelling on alternative futures, policy literacy, and climate media and entertainment.



PAULINA VELASCO

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, VELADA CONSULTING

Paulina is the Senior Vice President at Velada Consulting and spearheads the implementation of large-scale public participation strategies and innovative communication campaigns.

Paulina is an equitable outreach, civic engagement, and strategic communications expert. With extensive knowledge of communities in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, and Ventura Counties, along with strong connections to elected officials, labor leaders, and community figures in the region, Paulina collaborates with both public and private sectors to develop effective engagement strategies that foster consensus and achieve objectives.

Paulina excels as a creative strategist, crafting compelling content and engagement activities that shape public opinion on behalf of agencies and municipalities. She has demonstrated remarkable success in managing challenging projects throughout her career. Her expertise and experience have led to the successful execution of noteworthy multilingual electoral campaigns and engagement programs.



TOM WARD

CEO, EPOCH BOATS

Tom spent 15 years in corporate America in roles ranging from intern to executive director. Companies ranged from small family-owned businesses, to high growth PE backed firms, to multi-billion dollar publicly traded companies. Developed expertise in R&D and NPD of complex electro-mechanical devices. Previously led electro-mechanical projects responsible for generating over \$300M in new revenue over the past decade. Since 2015 I have built two teams from zero, solo opened an R&D/pilot manufacturing facility and led a 100+ team member organization responsible for support \$400M in yearly revenue. Left the corporate life in 2021 to 100% focus on climate tech. Focus is on transportation and energy storage.



CAITLIN WILEY

INTERN, MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORPORATION

Caitlin is pursuing a Master of Arts in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development at American University in Washington, DC. She is currently interning with the Millennium Challenge Corporation through the Rosenthal Fellowship in International Affairs, a program of the Partnership for Public Service. The Millennium Challenge Corporation is a foreign assistance agency helping lead the fight against global poverty through providing grants and training for development projects around the world.

Prior to beginning her graduate program, Caitlin served as a civilian federal employee with the U.S. Department of Defense in the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO). At DLNSEO she was responsible for assisting the office's program award recipients in securing federal employment utilizing their language skills, producing a Congressionally mandated report detailing the office's programmatic accomplishments, and interfacing with hiring partners across the federal government.

Caitlin holds a Bachelor of Arts in Global and International Studies and Spanish from Western Michigan University (WMU), where she graduated summa cum laude. While at WMU, Caitlin's academic achievement and active participation in the campus community were recognized with several awards, including a competitive, full-tuition academic scholarship, an award for student employee of the year, and admission to the Phi Beta Kappa national honor society.



RITURAJ YADAV

SOLUTIONS FLOOD ANALYST, ICEYE

Rituraj Yadav is a climate activist currently broadening his knowledge by pursuing a master's in environmental science and management. His areas of interest encompass energy finance, natural disasters, and climate change, reflecting a deep concern for our planet's future. His commitment extends into his professional life, serving as a Flood Analyst at ICEYE.

In his role at ICEYE, Rituraj conducts comprehensive assessments before, during, and after flood and wildfire events, which further solidifies his understanding of the complex patterns and global impacts of climate change. Additionally, he founded a student-led sustainability council at Idaho State University that led to the institutionalization and implementation of sustainability principles into the university's core values.

Rituraj's passion for environmental protection propels his ambition to innovate and adapt solutions that address the changing climate. This synergy of his academic and professional paths inspires him to continually seek sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. Above all, Rituraj believes in the power of positive change to cultivate a healthier planet.



CYNTHIA YUE

MPP STUDENT, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Cynthia is an international human rights, climate action, and social equity leader and advocate. She served as the 10th Youth Observer to the United Nations from 2021-2022, where she represented U.S. youth at the UN and led global initiatives on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. With prior sustainability experience as a former Fellow at the Embassy of France and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Youth Ambassador, she has reached millions of people, including by reinforcing the European Union's commitment to child welfare through launching a youth advocacy campaign that amassed over 450 million engagements.

As a Fellow at the White House Mental Health Youth Action Forum, she presented to President Biden, First Lady Biden, and the U.S. Surgeon General on combatting the national youth mental health crisis in underserved communities. Cynthia has spoken at the White House Summit for Democracy, the UN General Assembly, and the U.S. Institute of Peace. She has been featured in the BBC documentary Malcolm in the Midlands, U.S. Department of State's Share America, and NBC News. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude from George Washington University with a B.A. in International Affairs. She is currently a Master in Public Policy candidate at Harvard University.



LINXIAO ZHU

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, CLEAR VIEW ENERGY PARTNERS,
LLC

Linxiao is a Research Associate at ClearView Energy Partners, a DC-based energy macro research consultancy. He covers geopolitics, U.S. policy, oil, natural gas, and coal. Linxiao is also an OIES-Aramco Fellow at the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, contributing publications on the intersection of energy transition and geopolitics.

Previously, Linxiao worked as a consultant at the International Energy Agency and in various research positions, including at the Economist Intelligence Unit and IHS Markit. Linxiao holds a B.E. in Civil Engineering from Beijing Jiaotong University and an M.S. in Foreign Service from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.
