



D&I Committee 2025 Social Media Features

BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH

Profile of African American scientists

Diversity & Inclusion Committee

ACS
Chemistry for Life®



Kobe Cartwright

Production Engineer, Dow Performance Silicones
B.Sc. Chemical Engineering – Ohio State University

My idea of happiness is showing others what is possible and seeing their true potential. I enjoy using my identity as an African American Scientist to inspire or motivate others in this way.

I want to make sure the world is a better place, whether it's through making processes more sustainable and safer or providing products that improve people's lives.

Since I was a kid, I had really enjoyed learning about the world and how it worked. Whether that's running baking soda/vinegar volcano experiments or breaking apart toys to see how they worked. The field of chemistry seemed extremely interesting to me, and in 8th grade I was lucky enough to do a mini-enrichment program at the University of Cincinnati. There we learned about crystallization and had a chance to try some recrystallization techniques. Seeing the extremely advanced equipment, the passion the instructors had for the field, and the chance to see these methods in real time was extraordinary inspiring.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?

Becoming the first person in my family to graduate with an Engineering degree and being a role model to my younger cousins to pursue the same path.

Black History Month Features

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Angelar K. Muthike

Senior Research Specialist
B.Sc. Chemistry, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA
Ph.D. Chemistry, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

What Gets You Up Every Day?

In addition to enjoying my research work, I know there are a lot of people that look up to me and I want to be the hope, the light and the support that keeps them motivated.

What inspired you to become scientist?

During the summer of my freshman year in Spelman College, I had the opportunity to join a laser spectroscopy research lab. This experience was transformative and significantly altered my initial plans of attending medical school. While I found the intricacies of optical spectroscopy fascinating throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, it was the broader applications of analytical chemistry that truly captivated me. I discovered that analytical chemistry could be a powerful tool to address a wide range of research challenges, and I was eager to contribute to solving these existing issues.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice?

The mentorship and guidance of Prof. Peter Chen, a distinguished Chemistry Professor at Spelman College, played a pivotal role in my decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry. I joined his lab as a freshman, armed with only a basic understanding of general chemistry. However, Prof. Chen's encouragement and belief in my abilities, coupled with unwavering support and insightful advice were instrumental in building my scientific research interest and foundation.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

Be open to new opportunities and keep exploring.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far? Receiving the Zawadi Presidential Scholarship to study in Spelman College. If it was not for this scholarship, I would not have had the opportunities and scientific accomplishments that have followed.

What would you like to be remembered for? What is your desired legacy? A fun, passionate and engaging scientist dedicated to fostering growth and creating opportunities for the next generation of scientists, especially in areas and demographics where such opportunities are traditionally limited or unequal.

What is your idea of happiness? It is a state of equilibrium, a balance between what is within and beyond our control. While it is relatively straightforward to manage the factors within our control, the factors beyond our control can easily disrupt this balance.

Black History Month Features

National Women's History Month

Profile of women scientists

Diversity & Inclusion Committee




Bahar Aliakbarian, Ph.D.

she/her

Senior Director of Research and Development, Associate Professor – The Axia Institute, Michigan State University
Ph.D. Chemical, Material and Process Engineering

What inspired you to become scientist?

Ever since I was a child, my grandpa, Baba Einaky (which means "daddy with the glasses"), affectionately called me "Miss Bahar" or "Khanoom Bahar" in Farsi, our mother tongue. This nickname, used by all my family members, made me feel special, unique, and responsible for solving problems. My mom and dad always encouraged me to aim high and strive to be the best in my field, pushing me to explore and discover new things. Their support and belief in me sparked my curiosity and passion for science, leading me to where I am today.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice? My high school Chemistry teacher, Mrs. Barahimi, sparked my love for the fascinating reactions and processes that shape the materials around us. Her passion was contagious, and I became deeply curious about how products are made...I must also mention my PhD mentor, Patrizia Perego. With her strong personality and impeccable style, Patrizia always supported my curiosity and interest in international travel and cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self? If I could go back to my 20s, I wouldn't change a thing. Some decisions might not have turned out as I hoped, but I have no regrets. *Those experiences, even the challenging ones, shaped me into the person I am today.* I would advise 20-year-old Bahar to embrace every opportunity, stay flexible, and face all events without fear of the outcome. It's important to be responsible for your choices, whether they're good or bad, and to learn from each experience.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far? I believe my greatest achievement so far is the wonderful life I've built. I have an amazing husband, Masoud, and a beautiful family that includes my parents, my brother, and his family including my two lovely nieces, Donya and Luna. I'm also grateful for my old and new friends who have been part of my journey. Professionally, my career, enriched with tons of international experiences and awards, is something I'm incredibly proud of.

What would you like to be remembered for? What is your desired legacy? I would like to be remembered as a good person, a loving wife, a devoted child, a loyal friend, a supportive colleague, and a caring member of the community. I believe that goodness and kindness are the most enduring legacies we can leave behind...To me, this is the true meaning of happiness.

What Gets You Up Every Day? The rapid advancement of technology and the rise of AI are what get me up every day...I always encourage my students and team members to learn and use advanced technologies smartly and responsibly. However, I sometimes worry about how quickly technology is evolving and fear that one day I might struggle to communicate effectively with future generations.

National Women's History Month

Profile of women scientists

Diversity & Inclusion Committee




Sarah Wakumoto

she/her

Silicone Elastomers Process R&D Engineer, Dow
B.S. Chemical and Biological Engineering

What inspired you to become scientist?

The first memory I have of being interested in science dates to my pre-school graduation. At just four years old, I proudly declared that I wanted to be a scientist when I grew up. While I don't remember what initially sparked this interest, I do know that it has stayed with me ever since. I wish I could recall that moment of inspiration, because I would share it with every parent and educator I know!

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice?

In second grade, I had a math class that introduced me to different numbering systems like roman numerals and other advanced topics. The teacher was so engaging and enthusiastic and had such interesting things to teach. I loved that she didn't dumb things down and believed that we could learn some of these more difficult math skills, like how to count in base two, even from a young age. I had many great mentors along the way, but I think she helped me believe I could learn anything I applied myself to and could have fun doing it.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

I wish I could tell my 20-year-old self to stress less about every decision. I was very concerned about my first role setting the trajectory for my entire career, but the longer I am in industry and the more people I meet, the more it becomes clear that career paths are not set in stone, and that pivoting is possible at any stage.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far? I think my greatest achievement so far has simply been persevering in this field. No part of it has been easy and I am proud of myself and my role models for sticking with it.

What would you like to be remembered for? What is your desired legacy?

My greatest hope is that I can help to leave the scientific and engineering community more welcoming and hospitable to women and other marginalized groups than I found it. Society has come a long way, but I think it's important to recognize that we are still far from equity and that it will take work to get there.

What Gets You Up Every Day? Usually my cat, Tina, about 15 minutes before my alarm clock.

Women's History Month Features

Women's History Month Features

Kimberly Dinh ▸ ACS Diversity and Inclusion - Midland Section
May 8 · 🌐

We are joining Mental Health America's #TurnAwarenessIntoAction campaign this May to help spread the word that the time to take action for our mental health is NOW.

Find a list of resources for mental health here:
<https://mhanational.org/.../03/MHM-2025-Resource-List.pdf>

Mental health conditions are prevalent in all our communities but are often dismissed compared to other physical conditions. Here are some quick facts:

- Nearly 1 in 5 American adults will have a diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.
- 46 percent of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition sometime in their life. Half of those people will develop conditions by the age of 14.

Learn more at mhanational.org/may and follow along with us over the next few weeks!

#MHM2025



MHANATIONAL.ORG
Mental Health Month | Mental Health America

Mental Health Awareness Example Feature (+ 3 others)

Kimberly Dinh ▸ ACS Diversity and Inclusion - Midland Section
June 13 · 🌐

We're into June and it's Pride Month! Looking for ways to celebrate and learn? Check out <https://greatlakesbaypride.org/>. The Great Lakes Bay Pride Festival is coming up on **Saturday, June 28**.

And check out some of the work being done by ACS Pride in the newsletter to make STEM more inclusive!

#PrideMonth #PrideMonth2025 #Pride2025 #ACSPRIDE

PDF
1749823962583.pdf

View in group

Pride Month Feature

Kimberly Dinh ▸ ACS Diversity and Inclusion - Midland Section
September 29 · 🌐

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually from September 15 to October 15. It first started as a week-long observance in 1968 and then expanded to a month in 1988. The month coincides with the independence days of several Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico.

In recognition, we profiled our ACS Chair Elect (2026 Chair): Judith Espinoza! Read more about her varied experiences and career.

[The Midland Section of the American Chemical Society](#)

#HispanicHeritageMonth #NationalHispanicHeritageMonth #MesDeLaHerenciaHispana #latinx #inclusionmatters

Hispanic Heritage Month Feature (Long form, 3 pages)

Kimberly Dinh ▸ ACS Diversity and Inclusion - Midland Section
November 14 at 1:51 PM · 🌐

We're well into November and it's Native American Heritage Month or commonly known as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month.

Michigan actually derives from the Algonquin word "Mishigamaw," meaning "big lake" or "great water." It may also derive from "Michi" and "Gama."

To celebrate, CMU's Indigenous Affairs is hosting multiple events (with many to come yet!) throughout November. ... [See more](#)

Indigenous Affairs- Central Michigan University
October 31 at 10:25 AM · 🌐

Bozho Relatives!
We are excited to share the wonderful events we have planned for Native American Heritage Month 2025. ... [See more](#)

Native American Heritage Month Feature



Falon Kalutantirige, Ph.D.

Senior Scientist, Core Analytical Sciences, DuPont
B.Sc. Chemistry, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, Sri Lanka
Ph.D. Materials Chemistry, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

You are on the right path—stay on it, trust yourself, and keep pushing forward.

What inspired you to become scientist?

I've always been curious and loved problem-solving. What better way to quench my curiosity and put my problem-solving to then test than by becoming a scientist? Exploring the unknown drives me to keep pushing the boundaries of my creativity and finding innovative solutions gives me a sense of achievement.

Did anyone have a particular impact on your career choice?

Two amazing women have served as my inspiration and impacted my career journey. My undergrad advisor Prof. Nilwala Kottegoda, sparked my passion for Materials Chemistry. Prof. Qian Chen, my Ph.D. advisor, shaped me into the scientist I am today.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

You are on the right path—stay on it, trust yourself, and keep pushing forward.

What is your idea of happiness?

Spending time with the people I love.



Krishnaja Duvvuri, Ph.D.

She/hers
Associate Research Scientist, Product Development R&D, Dow
Ph.D. Organic Chemistry, The Ohio State University

What gets you up every day?

The opportunity to solve hard problems to make the world a better place. Whether it is through my work as a scientist at Dow, finding innovative solutions for customer needs, or through volunteering and STEM outreach in the community, the prospect of making a positive impact keeps me motivated and excited to start each day.

What inspired you to become scientist?

From a young age, I have always been very interested and curious about how the world around me works. My parents encouraged me to explore science through various extracurricular activities. My father especially, an engineer in R&D, was a strong advocate for hands-on research experiences, which ultimately inspired me to pursue a career in science.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice?

At each step of my career, I have been fortunate to be able to discuss opportunities and career choices with my mentors at the time. Early on, my parents guided me towards pursuing an undergraduate degree in pharmacy. My undergraduate chemistry professor played a significant role in sparking my interest in organic chemistry, which motivated me to pursue a master's and PhD in the field. My doctoral advisor, Professor T. V. RajanBabu, is a huge influence and inspired me with his dedication and ability to teach complex concepts in an accessible manner.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

If I could give my 20-year-old self some advice, it would be to be kinder to myself. Embrace the journey, celebrate the progress, and trust that you're doing your best 😊

Women's History Month Feature

Women's History Month Feature

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Profile of
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Arpita Sharma, Ph.D.

She/her
Senior Scientist R&D, DuPont, Molykote Specialty Lubricants
Ph.D. Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, Cornell University

Why do you volunteer your time with ACS and the Women's Chemist Committee?

To actively be a part of and support the local scientific community, and to grow professionally and personally. When I moved to Midland in Sept. 2023, I found it a bit difficult to meet people and form a community here initially but was very pleased to find the many ACS groups actively working to connect people. I decided to be a part of the local ACS teams to further their cause, all the while meeting some wonderful people and making meaningful connections. It's a win-win!

What inspired you to become a scientist?

I am fortunate to have been born into a family and culture that highly values education. My parents, teachers and professors have been very supportive, encouraging me to explore whichever career path I wanted to pursue. I have always (maybe mostly) enjoyed studying and wanted to continue as long as possible. Ph.D. work definitely came with its challenges, but it helped me realize I would like to be more involved in research in industrial settings, so when the opportunity came, I decided to become an R&D scientist.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

Don't be afraid to explore. Don't shy away from uncomfortable situations because that is how you grow. Even if you don't know how to do something, give it a try if you're interested. Also, try not to compare your journey to others, everyone has a unique path so focus on improving and growing yourself.

What are your favorite hobbies?

Crochet, tennis, and reading books (almost exclusively fantasy fiction!).

What gives you fulfillment outside of work?

Talking to my family and working on my health goals.

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Profile of
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Janice Hall Tomasik, Ph.D.

She/her
B. S. Chemistry, High Distinction, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Ph. D. Chemistry, University of Wisconsin-Madison

What would you like to be remembered for? What is your desired legacy?

I would like to be remembered as a person who helped others, who made others breathe easier, and who made the world a bit brighter. I hope I leave behind a legacy of kindness and serve as an example of how to move in the world, encouraging people to help and learn from each other, despite differences.

What inspired you to become scientist? The people in my life and the world I grew up in inspired my journey into science. I've always been naturally curious and eager to understand the reasons behind how and why things work. Fortunately, I've had incredible role models who demonstrated what it means to think and explore like a scientist.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice? My father is a civil engineer and general engineering emeritus faculty, and both he and my mother taught me to appreciate science and math from a very young age. My older brother is a materials science engineer, and my younger brother is in the field of computer science...We used to do fun "kitchen chemistry" experiments, and participate in STEM activities in and out of school...As I grew older, I met some wonderful role models in my chosen field of chemistry - my science teachers in high school, my undergrad and graduate professors (...the list is long!), my research advisors, and my boss when I was an undergrad lab assistant. Each of these wonderful people have helped guide me, given me chances, believed in me, and supported me as I explored my interests and pursued a love of chemistry.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self? Worry a little less about grades 😊, and try not to let your anxiety and fears keep you from seeking out more experiences and opportunities — consider joining a research group sooner, and meet more people!

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far? In my field, I'm proud of my career and of helping others discover an appreciation of chemistry and to achieve their goals in STEM. Outside of my profession, I think my greatest achievement is my family and home, Michael and Emma, and grateful to my wonderful husband, Adam. I am incredibly proud of my two great kids.

What is your idea of happiness? Besides spending time with my loved ones, my idea of happiness is to explore, experiment, and learn things that give me deeper insights that will benefit the world and humanity, without the burdens of deadlines, performance metrics, and external directives. I would love the freedom to explore in my own time, in my own way - and while on a beach with sunshine and waves.

How does your identity as a woman in STEM play into this? As a woman in STEM, I recognize the importance of serving as a role model for other women, as someone who can help fight for and establish equal opportunities for everyone in the field.

What Gets You Up Every Day? The curiosity about what exactly the day will bring and the hope that I can use my time to help others and achieve my goals, and the knowledge that I get to spend more time with my friends and loved ones.

Women's History Month Feature

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National Women's History Month

Profile of women scientists

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Melissa Headland

Senior Operations Leader, Consumer Solutions, Dow
B.S. Mechanical Engineering

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

Take time for yourself and your hobbies! School and work will always be there, but an opportunity to try something new may not!

What inspired you to become scientist?

I always was curious and enjoyed problem solving when I was growing up. Some of my favorite school projects involved constructing and building. When I was looking into careers, engineering seemed like the natural fit for me to continue down this different path. During college, I had the opportunity to intern at Bridgestone in their R&D labs and at Dow in manufacturing. These opportunities confirmed I'd made the right decision as I enjoyed that every day was different, and we were producing products that people needed in their everyday lives.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice?

My hometown is a suburb of Youngstown, OH which is a very industrial area. My dad is a retired Metallurgist who worked in the titanium industry, and I grew up surrounded by people in my church and community who were operators and engineers primarily working in the auto industry. I think having the opportunity to see so many different people working in this industry, including very successful women, influenced me to go into a career in manufacturing myself. Once I was in college, my sister's best friend was a Co-Op student at Dow and encouraged me to apply for the program as well. I decided to apply at a SWE conference and was offered a position – I've worked at Dow ever since!

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?

In 2021, I was awarded the Manufacturing Institute's Emerging Leader Award which recognizes rising female talent in science, technology, engineering, and production.

What would you like to be remembered for? What is your desired legacy?

Being a supportive friend and colleague who is always willing to help when it's needed

What is your idea of happiness? How do you get fulfillment outside of work?

I enjoy staying active through sailing, skiing, and curling. I also enjoy giving back to the community and sit on the board of a few non-profits. My idea of happiness is spending time with family and friends sailing the Great Lakes in the summer and skiing in the winter.

What Gets You Up Every Day?

Sleep is also one of my favorite hobbies, so a very loud alarm on the total opposite side of the room is what it takes to get me up each day!

National Women's History Month

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Julia Sunderland, Ph.D.

Associate Research Scientist, Dow Silicones Product Development
B.Sc. & M.Sc., University of Frankfurt, Germany
Ph.D. Inorganic Chemistry, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Why do you volunteer with ACS and the Women Chemist Committee?

Being part of the WCC helped me connect with and learn from my fellow scientists in the community and beyond. My teachers and mentors have tremendous impact on my excitement for science. I joined the WCC because I enjoy sharing, teaching and spreading awareness of how amazing science is and to inspire girls, women and our next generation of scientists.

What inspired you to become scientist?

I was always really intrigued by the natural world and things around us every day. I wanted to understand how and why things work and be able to explain the reason behind how our fascinating world and nature functions.

Did anyone (prof/mentor/family/other) have a particular impact on your career choice?

Some of my early, middle and high school science teachers were always passionate and able to explain science in an engaging way. This inspired me to pursue chemistry studies.

Any advice you would give your 20-year-old self?

Spend more time doing what you enjoy and are passionate about because you can't go back in time.

What do you consider your greatest achievement so far?

Balancing being a working mom of two young kids (6 and 4) with my challenging career in the sciences trying to solve the problems of today and tomorrow.

What Gets You Up Every Day?

My family

Women's History Month Feature

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