



Young Gifted and STEM Profile – Who Am I?

Cheyenne Polius – UK/St Lucia

1. Who are you and what is your STEM Superpower?

I'm a Physics and Astrophysics Masters student and I am the Queen of charts! No matter what the data is, I can make a chart that is both intuitive and interesting to look at. Data visualisation is definitely one my strengths in STEM.

2. When did you first realise you were passionate about your STEM subject or field?

I always loved Science at school, but I realised Physics was my favourite as soon as I started studying the 3 sciences separately at 15. Soon after I realised that all the Space documentaries I loved, were actually using Physics to explain our amazing universe. That is when my passion for Astrophysics was clear and I haven't turned back since.

3. Describe the route you took, which lead from finishing your GCSEs until now.

I did my A-Levels in Chemistry, Pure Mathematics & Physics in my home, St Lucia. Then I moved to the UK to pursue an **Integrated Masters in Physics** and Astrophysics. I ended up taking a year out to do a placement.

4. If you had to study/focus on ONE STEM area for the rest of your career what would it be and why?

Stellar Astrophysics! Stars are so fascinating to me. The universe began with mostly Hydrogen and Helium and every element after that was created in the core of a star. Those elements get released into the universe when a big star explodes as a supernova at the end of its life. So, every chemical in your body apart from Hydrogen was once in the core of a star. There is so much more fascinating physics that explains how stars work and the different types and colours. I don't think I will ever get tired of learning about these huge balls of gas.

5. What do you enjoy most about your day to day role?

I love problem-solving. Solving mysteries and completing puzzles is something I naturally love to do and that is the nature of physics and astrophysics, so I love getting to do that every day.



Cheyenne at the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory, on top of a mountain in the Canary Islands

6. Who would name as your main STEMspiration and why?

I really cannot think of one person. Since I've started my degree, I've met so many amazing people, from so many different STEM areas through conferences, social media and other events. Everyone has an amazing story and most had to jump many hurdles to do what they love. I've kind of taken a piece of everyone's story as inspiration to keep going.

I am being constantly inspired to never give up just by being surround by so many amazing people already in STEM.

7. Outside of STEM, what are your other hobbies?

I love arts and crafts. Anything that involves painting, drawing, colouring, afro hair care has also evolved into a hobby, as I now make educational/interesting videos of me doing my hair.

8. Lastly, if you could give our Young Gifted and STEM readers one piece of advice, what would it be?

*“STEM is only for smart people”, “People in STEM just have a special brain”, “Some people just get it and the rest of us will just never be good at it”. None of that is true! **All you need to be in STEM is passion and hard work.** Those two things will lead you to achieve anything you put your mind to and do not let anyone tell you otherwise.*

