

Women in Astronomy



Prof. Merieme Chadid

Professor of Astronomy

Merieme is a Professor of Astronomy at the University of Nice and was the first Moroccan woman to set foot at the South Pole.

She began her education at the University of Casablanca and then moved to France to work on studying a strange class of pulsating stars.



"After getting my Graduate Degree at University of Casablanca, I went in France where I obtained my PhD in 'Stellar Pulsation and Evolution' at Observatoire de Haute Provence, it was the first PhD under the observatory's domes and also the first Moroccan Astronomer "who's female!". I then spent 3 years as Research Engineer of 'Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique' and I was selected by the European Southern Observatory as the first working astronomers to install and to run the Very Large Telescopes (VLT) in Paranal of Chile "there, the female presence has been negligible!!". Now back to France, I have a permanent astronomer position at Cote d'Azur Observatory".



"Beside my 4 years stay in Paranal of Chile, in the Atacama Desert, the driest in the world, my best accomplishment is the successful installation of an astronomical experiments at Dome C in the South Pole, right in the heart of Antarctica continent, in one the coldest, most deserted and inaccessible place in the world!"

Merieme is married and has two young children Tycho (aged 3) and Leyla, (aged 4).



Dr. Sharmila Goedhart

Astronomer- Hartebeesthoek Radio Observatory

"I study how the largest stars in our galaxy are born. These young stars are still deep within their parental clouds of dust and gas and cannot be seen with optical telescopes. Radio emission can pass through the cloud and be detected on Earth. In special conditions, the young star can energise molecules to form masers (like lasers, but at microwave wavelengths). We can detect the radiation from these powerful masers even when nothing else can be seen".

"People often ask me why I chose this career. I cannot imagine doing anything else. My mind is always engaged and I am never bored. Nothing can match the thrill of seeing the first results appearing on-screen after lots of hard work in doing the data processing."

Sharmila was born in Cape Town, South Africa. She lives with Andrew, her husband of eight years and their two German Shepherd dogs.



Dr. Busaba Kramer

Assistant Director, National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand

"As a high school student I attended a summer science camp at Chiang Mai University and heard lectures about astronomy and the Universe. Inspired by this experience I observed Halley's Comet from my backyard. As a result I wanted to study astronomy, learn about the Universe in more detail and to teach others".

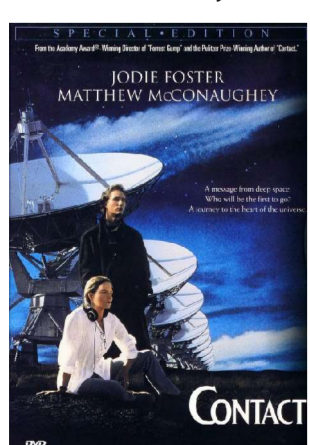


Busaba was born in Thailand but gained her Ph.D at the University of Manchester in England. She is an accomplished researcher in the field of Radio Astronomy, in particular the formation of massive stars.

Dr. Jill Tarter

Director, Centre for SETI Research

Jill started her career as a researcher in radio astronomy. She then worked as a project scientist on the NASA Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) program until 1993, then to the "Centre for SETI Research" in California, where she is now the Director.



She serves on the management board of the "Allen Telescope Array"- a planned super-telescope comprising 350 individual radio antennas which will survey the universe for both natural astrophysical phenomena and for signs of developed civilizations on other planets. The character played by Jodie Foster in the film "Contact" was based on Jill.

Dr. Hayley Bignall

Support Scientist, Joint Institute for VLBI in Europe (JIVE)

Hayley was born in Adelaide, Australia in 1976. She got her PhD in Astronomy & Astrophysics from the University of Adelaide in 2003. Since then she has been living in the Netherlands and working as a Support Scientist at JIVE.

"My job involves processing and quality analysis of VLBI data, which are sent from various radio telescopes to be combined in the 'Correlator' at Dwingeloo. I also gives feedback to VLBI Friends at the telescopes and astronomers to help ensure they get good scientific results from their observations.



I spend half of my time on my own research interests, which include studying activity in the centres of distant galaxies which generate powerful radiating jets, and investigating stuff between the stars in our own Galaxy, which we can't see directly, but we can study by its effect on the radio emission from background sources.

Although while at work I spend much of my time sitting in front of a computer, I like to get outdoors when I can. I enjoy rowing, hiking, playing 5-a-side soccer, cooking, and sometimes just relaxing in front of the TV. A great thing about my job is that it's enabled me to meet a lot of interesting people from all over the world, who share an interest in science but have different cultural backgrounds and perspectives".

