

Tina Lasisi

Assistant Professor — University of Michigan
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Education

- 2015—2021 **Ph.D.**, Biological Anthropology
Doctoral dissertation: “The genetic architecture and evolutionary function of human scalp hair morphology” [digital copy available]
Advisors: Drs. Nina Jablonski and Mark Shriver
The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Anthropology
- 2011—2014 **B.A.**, Archaeology and Anthropology (First Class Honours)
Undergraduate dissertation: “Human hair diversity: quantitative variation of hair fibre shape and pigmentation”
Advisor: Dr. Colin Shaw
University of Cambridge, Department Archaeology and Anthropology,
Division of Biological Anthropology

Professional Experience

Academic

- 2023—present **Assistant Professor**
University of Michigan
Department of Anthropology
Additional affiliations: Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology,
Genome Science Training Program (Center for Statistical Genetics),
Center for Computational Medicine & Bioinformatics,
African Studies Center
- 2022—2023 **Postdoctoral Researcher**
Supervisors: Drs. Michael (Doc) Edge & Jazlyn Mooney
University of Southern California
Department of Quantitative and Computational Biology
- 2021—2022 **Postdoctoral Researcher**
Supervisor: Dr. Nina Jablonski
The Pennsylvania State University
Department of Anthropology

Other

- 2021—present **Research Consultant**
Clients: Microsoft, HHMI, LabXchange
- 2022—2024 **Science Show Host & Writer**
PBS Digital Studios *Why Am I Like This?*

Research interests

Hair | Skin | Pigmentation | Evolutionary biology | Population genetics | Forensic genetics | Science communication and education

Grants, honors & awards

- 2024 The AABA and Leakey Foundation Communication & Outreach Award in Honor of Camilla Smith
- 2023 Popular Science Brilliant 10
- 2022 Jon C. Graff, PhD Prize for Excellence in Science Communication
- 2022 Science News Top 10 Scientists To Watch
- 2021 Video Contest 1st Place Winner, Graduate Student Exhibition, Penn State, (\$500)
- 2019 Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grant (Gr. 9911), (\$19,700)
- 2019 Africana Research Center Grant, Penn State, (\$1,000)
- 2019 Hill Post-Comprehensive Fellowship, Department of Anthropology, Penn State, (\$5,000)
- 2019 William T. Sanders Graduate Award, Department of Anthropology, Penn State, (\$300)
- 2019 National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (No. 1847845), (\$31,703)
- 2018 RGSO Conference Travel Award, Penn State, (\$400)
- 2018 Liberal Arts External Funding Incentive Award, (\$500)
- 2018 Millennium Science Pitch Competition with PPG Industries, Penn State, (\$500)
- 2018 Summer Institute in Statistical Genetics Scholarship, University of Washington, (\$1,950)
- 2018 Juan Comas Prize, American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA), (\$500)
- 2018 Video Contest 3rd Place Winner, Graduate Student Exhibition, Penn State, (\$100)
- 2018 Hill Pre-Comprehensive Fellowship, Department of Anthropology, Penn State, (\$2,000)
- 2017 RGSO Graduate Student Travel Award, Penn State, (\$400)
- 2014 The Corpus Christi Prize and Studentship, University of Cambridge
- 2014 Examination Prize, University of Cambridge
- 2013 The Manners/Corpus Scholarship, University of Cambridge
- 2013 Dissertation Research Fund Award, University of Cambridge, (£300)

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- 2024 Palma-Martínez, M. J., Posadas-García, Y. S., López-Ángeles, B. E., Quiroz-López, C., Lewis, A. C. F., Bird, K. A., **Lasisi, T.**, Zaidi, A. A., & Sohail, M. The multi-scale complexity of human genetic variation beyond continental groups. (*In Review*, preprint on *bioRxiv*).
- 2024 **Lasisi, T.** A most peculiar parasol: Exploring thermoregulation through human hair curl. *Temperature.*, 11(1), 1–3.
- 2023 **Lasisi, T.**, Claw, K. G., Fox, K., & Zaidi, A. A. Editorial: The ethics and challenges of studying the genetics of marginalized populations. *Frontiers in Genetics.* 14, 1260457. [Co-Editor Special Issue]
- 2023 **Lasisi, T.**, Smallcombe, J. W., Kenney, W. L., Shriver, M. D., Zydney, B., Jablonski, N. G., & Havenith, G. Human scalp hair as a thermoregulatory adaptation. *PNAS*, 120(24), e2301760120.
- 2021 **Lasisi, T.**, Zaidi, A. A., Webster, T. H., Stephens, N. B., Rouch, K., Jablonski, N. G., & Shriver, M. D. High-throughput phenotyping methods for quantifying hair fiber morphology. *Scientific Reports*, 11(1), 1–11.
- 2021 **Lasisi, T.** The constraints of racialization: How classification and valuation hinder scientific research on human variation. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.

- 2019 Quillen, E. E., Norton, H. L., Parra, E. J., Lona-Durazo, F., Ang, K. C., Illiescu, F. M., Pearson, L. N., Shriver, M. D., **Lasisi, T.**, Gokcumen, O., Starr, I., Lin, Y.-L., Martin, A. R., & Jablonski, N. G. Shades of complexity: New perspectives on the evolution and genetic architecture of human skin. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 168 Suppl 67, 4–26.
- 2019 Fuentes, A., Ackermann, R. R., Athreya, S., Bolnick, D., **Lasisi, T.**, Lee, S.-H., McLean, S.-A., & Nelson, R. AAPA Statement on Race and Racism. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 169(3), 400–402.
- 2018 **Lasisi, T.**, & Shriver, M. D. Focus on African diversity confirms complexity of skin pigmentation genetics. *Genome Biology*, 19(1), 13.
- 2017 Dadzie, O. E., **Lasisi, T.**, & Jablonski, N. G. The Anthropology of Human Scalp Hair. In N. A. Vashi & H. I. Maibach (Eds.), *Dermatoanthropology of Ethnic Skin and Hair* (pp. 315–330). Springer International Publishing.
- 2016 **Lasisi, T.**, Ito, S., Wakamatsu, K., & Shaw, C. N. Quantifying variation in human scalp hair fiber shape and pigmentation. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 160(2), 341–352.

Invited talks

- 2024 Oct Cold Spring Harbor Genetic Surveillance and the Weight of Historical Bias. Banbury Center Meeting on “An ‘Indigenous Reference Genome’: Ethical, Cultural, Policy, and Governance Considerations.”
- 2024 Oct Montagna Pigmentation and Perception: Evolutionary Biology, Human Variation, and the Social Dimensions of Skin Color (**Keynote**). Montagna Symposium on the Biology of Skin.
- 2024 May UMich-CSG Why Care About Hair? Phenotypic Complexity & Admixture. Center for Statistical Genetics, University of Michigan
- 2024 Apr Western Hair as a model for phenotypic complexity. Western University, Ontario, Canada
- 2023 Apr AMNH SciCafe: At the Root of Human Hair.
- 2023 Mar Pfizer, Inc. When Self-Identity Is Challenged in Dermatology: Clinical Implications for Alopecia Areata & Vitiligo. American Academy of Dermatology Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.
- 2022 Apr UZH Hair, skin & racialization: an evolutionary perspective. University of Zurich 2022 Colloquium Series.
- 2022 Mar UPenn Sense & salience: measuring what matters in hair and skin. Penn Anthropology 2022 Colloquium Series.
- 2022 Feb Rutgers Hair, skin & racialization in human evolutionary biology. Rutgers University, Department of Anthropology.
- 2021 Nov UT Austin Human hair evolution:reframing form & function. Seminar Series, UT Austin, Department of Anthropology.
- 2021 Nov Yale Quantifying bias in constructed categories of hair and skin. Fall 2021 Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Seminar Series, Yale
- 2021 Sep Duke Hair, skin & bias: The cost of convenient categories for continuous phenotypes. Spring Seminar Series, Duke Department of Evolutionary Anthropology.
- 2021 Aug Pixar Understanding human phenotypic diversity: hair morphology, pigmentation and admixture. Special Guest Seminar, Pixar Animation.
- 2021 Jun Oxford From classification to quantification: hair morphology. Archaeological Science Seminar Series, Oxford School of Archaeology.

- 2021 Jan UVic Phenotyping & evolutionary genomics: what we can learn from studying hair morphology. Spring Colloquium Series, University of Victoria, Department of Anthropology.
- 2020 Nov NYU What's in a trait? Genomes, phenomes and scientific narratives of racialized traits. Center for the Study of Human Origins Fall 2020 Colloquia Series, NYU Department of Anthropology.
- 2020 Oct UMich Measuring hair & skin: the importance of phenotypes in evolutionary genomics. Fall 2020 Virtual: Series Genetics, Evolution, and Human Behavior, University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology.
- 2020 Oct Smithsonian How Hair Reveals the Futility of Race Categories. HOT (Human Origins Today) Topic Series, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.
- 2019 Feb Chatham The richest ornament of a woman: Hair, race and the white male gaze in human evolutionary theory. Chatham University, Women's Institute Distinguished Lecture Series and Sciences Department Seminar Series.
- 2018 Oct Cambridge The Nearly Naked Ape: human evolution just got hairier. University of Cambridge, Biological Anthropology Seminar Series.

Conferences

- 2024 **Lasisi, T.** Genetics and hair texture: Evolution of hair diversity. Montagna Symposium on the Biology of Skin [presentation]
- 2024 Elena Zavala, Camila Tamburrini & **Tina Lasisi.** *Genetics, Molecular Biology, and the Future of Forensic Science* [Symposium Organizer]. Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.
- 2024 Taylor, S. E., Schraiber, J. G., **Lasisi, T.** From Birth to Maturity: A Phylogenetic Investigation of Sexual Dimorphism in Primates. The 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Biological Anthropologists, Los Angeles, CA, USA. [poster]
- 2024 **Lasisi, T.** Combating Race Science: Strategies for Anthropologists. The 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Association of Biological Anthropologists, Los Angeles, CA. [Discussant]
- 2023 **Lasisi, T.** *Population Differences in Long and Short-Range Genetic Detectability and Their Impact on Justice.* Midwest Pop Gen. [Talk]
- 2023 **Lasisi, T.** *Rethinking genotype-phenotype mapping: hair as a case study.* The 92nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Reno, NV, USA. [Talk]
- 2022 Palma Martínez, M., Posadas García, Y., Quiroz López, C., **Lasisi, T.**, Bird, K. A., Zaidi, A., & Sohail, M. *Challenging continental groupings of humans using a data-driven approach.* Annual Meeting for the American Society of Human Genetics. [Poster]
- 2022 Tapanes, E., **Lasisi, T.**, Kamilar, J. M., & Bradley, B. J. Genomics and cellular biology of primate pigmentation: lessons from other taxa. The 91st Annual Meeting of the American Association of Biological Anthropologists, Denver, CO, USA. [Talk]
- 2022 **Lasisi, T.** & Schaefer, B. *Integumentary Anthropology.* The 91st Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Denver, CO, USA. [Symposium Chair & Co-Organizer]
- 2021 Beasley, M., **Lasisi, T.**, Schmitt, C., Molopyane, K., Ocobock, C., Kissel, M., & Dunsworth, H. *Bringing Truth to a Post-Truth World: how anthropologists engage and assess their science communication.* The 90th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Baltimore, MD, USA. [Panel]
- 2021 **Lasisi, T.** *Studying hair morphology in African and African-descendant populations.* The 90th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. [Talk]

- 2021 **Lasisi, T.**, Smallcombe, J., Shriver, M. D., Kenney, W. L., Havenith, G., & Jablonski, N. G. *Hair fiber morphology and function: at the intersection of anthropology, physiology, and engineering*. Experimental Biology. [Talk]
- 2019 **Lasisi, T.**, Zaidi, A., Webster, T. H., Jablonski, N. G., & Shriver, M. D. *New insights into human hair variation: High-throughput phenotyping paves way for genome-wide association studies and selection screens*. In The 88th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (Vol. 168, pp. 137–137). Cleveland, OH, USA. [Talk]
- 2019 Shriver, M. D., White, J. D., **Lasisi, T.**, Eller, R. J., González-Zarzar, T., Indencleef, K., ... Claes, P. *SNPs discovered in European GWAS shape worldwide facial diversity*. In The 88th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists. Cleveland, OH, USA. [Poster]
- 2018 **Lasisi, T.**, Ito, S., Wakamatsu, K., Shriver, M. D., & Jablonski, N. G. (2018). *More than meets the eye: what chemical analyses can reveal about hair color*. In The 87th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists(162, pp. 153–153). Austin, TX, USA. [Poster]
- 2018 Jablonski, N. G., **Lasisi, T.**, Abhimanyu, A., Coussens, A. K., Naude, C. E., Chaplin, G., ... Wilkinson, R. J. *Variation in skin reflectance and pigmentation genes in young adults of Xhosa and Cape Mixed ancestry from the Western Cape, South Africa*. In The 87th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (Vol. 162, pp. 228–228). Austin, TX, USA. [Poster]
- 2017 **Lasisi, T.**, Jablonski, N. G., Shriver, M. D., Kenney, W. L., & Havenith, G. *Thermoregulatory properties of hair: is human hair morphology adaptive?* In The 17th International Conference on Environmental Ergonomics (pp. 66–66). Kobe, Japan.[Poster]

Trainees

Current

Paloma Contreras, University of Michigan Anthropology [PhD expected 2025, dissertation chair]

Kianna Hendricks, North Carolina A&T Data Science and Engineering [Master's expected 2025, external committee member]

Lily Heald, University of Michigan Statistics and Human Origins, Biology and Behavior [Bachelor's expected 2026, thesis supervisor]

Former

Taylor Spencer, University of Michigan Anthropology [PhD defended 2024, dissertation chair]

Teaching

Online Courses

Launched July 2024 AI-Powered Data Analysis [Coursera], University of Michigan

Instructor

Winter 2025 ANTH 101: Introduction to Anthropology, University of Michigan

Winter 2025 ANTH 342: Nature/Culture Now!, University of Michigan

Guest Lecturer

Winter 2024	HG 546: Genetics in Human Biology and Disease, University of Michigan
Spring 2022	BIO 437: Human Adaptation, University of Zurich
Spring 2022	ANTH B208: Human Biology, Bryn Mawr College
Fall 2021	FA 790: History, Method, and Theory in Biological Anthropology, Boston University
Fall 2021	FRNSC 413: Criminalistics: Biology, Penn State
Spring 2021	ANTH 427: Anthropology and Race, UNC
Spring 2021	GEN ED 1027: Human Evolution and Human Health, Harvard
Fall 2020	ANTH 812: Current Topics in Anthropological Genetics, Yale
Fall 2019	BBH 302: Diversity and Health, Penn State
Spring 2019	ANTH 197: Anthropology, Ancestry, and You, Penn State
Fall 2018	ANTH 197: Anthropology, Ancestry, and You, Penn State

Teaching Assistant

Spring 2017	ANTH 021: Introduction to Biological Anthropology, Penn State
Spring 2016	ANTH 045: Cultural Anthropology, Penn State
Fall 2015	ANTH 001: Introductory Anthropology, Penn State

Service**Committees, Boards & Leadership Roles**

2024—Current	Black in Biological Anthropology (BiBA), President of the Board of Directors
2020—Current	Black in Biological Anthropology (BiBA), Member & Co-founder
2018—2019	Committee on Diversity - International Subcommittee, AAPA, Co-Chair
2017—2019	Committee on Diversity, AAPA, Member

Invited Workshops, Panels, Advisory & Educational Engagements

2024 Oct	Banbury Center Meeting on “An ‘Indigenous Reference Genome’: Ethical, Cultural, Policy, and Governance Considerations,” Cold Spring Harbor, NY, USA
2023 Nov	NHGRI Workshop “Advances in the Genetic Architecture of Complex Human Traits,” Bethesda, MD, USA
2023—Current	Advisor, Race Education Working Group, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History
2023	Featured anthropologist in a W.W. Norton publication; produced educational video content for classroom use

Peer Review

Reviewer for: Journal of Microscopy, PLOS ONE, Evolutionary Anthropology, Frontiers in Genetics, eLife, American Journal of Biological Anthropology, British Journal of Dermatology.

University Service**University of Michigan**

2023—Current	STEM-Africa, African Studies Center, Member
2023—Current	Collective Action Committee, Department of Anthropology, Member

Penn State

- 2018—2019 Anthropology Graduate Student Association (AGSA), President
 2017—2019 AGSA Welfare Committee, Founder & Chair
 2017—2019 AGSA Outreach Committee, Founding Member
 2017—2018 AGSA, Secretary
 2018—2020 Black Graduate Student Association, IT Chair

Community engagement & outreach

- 2024 College of the Canyons, Santa Clarita, CA, **Invited Lecture**
 2023 Historically Speaking: Next Generation of Black Leaders in Genetic Science. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture and NHGRI **Panelist**
 2023 American Museum of Natural History and the Leakey Foundation, SciCafe Talk, At the Root of Human Hair **Invited Lecture**
 2023 PBS 2023 Television Critics Association (TCA) Winter Press Tour, **Panelist**
 Jan
 2022 SING Canada 2022 Social Media Workshop, **Panelist**
 2022 Cambridge University, Archaeology Field Club, **Invited Lecture**
 2022 California State University Dominguez Hills, Anthropology Club, **Invited Lecture**
 2022 Delaware Community College, **Invited Lecture**
 2021 Annual Meeting for the American Society of Human Genetics, Finding Your Voice: How to navigate challenges in the workforce while not compromising your pursuit for equity and advocating for diverse communities. **Panelist**
 2021 DisCon. The 79th World Science Fiction Convention. **Panelist & Speaker**
 2021 UCLA Biological Anthropology, Community involvement & representation(s) in biological anthropology, **Panelist**
 2021 Black in Bio Anth Week, **Co-Organizer**
 2021 The Leakey Foundation's Young Professionals Group Speaker Series, Why Care About Hair?, **Panelist**
 2019 Museum of Modern Art New York, Research & Development Salon 33: Hair, **Invited Contributor**
 2019 Bioinformatics and Genomics Retreat, Panel on Science Communication. Penn State, **Panelist**
 2019 Pan-African Professional Alliance, Penn State, Addressing Challenges in Knowledge Production in the Black Diaspora, Spring Conference, **Panelist**
 2019 Pan-African Professional Alliance, Penn State, Pan-Africanism Today Dialogue, **Panelist**
 2018 Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre. London, UK, **Invited Speaker**
 2018 Caveat, Underground Science Festival. New York City, **Speaker and Panelist**
 2018 Extended Learning Program, Radiopark Elementary. State College, PA, **Session Leader**
 2017 Graduate Women in Science. Penn State, **Workshop Leader**
 2017 Finding Your Roots, Genetics Summer Camp. Penn State, **Instructor**

Popular media

- 2024 May The Story of Human Hair with Tina Lasisi. The Leakey Foundation [podcast]
 2024 Mar Hairy Tales – The Nature of Things (Season 63, Episode 10) [documentary series]
 2024 Mar Anthropologists take up arms against 'race science'. Science. [cited in press]
 2023 Aug The evolutionary advantage of curly hair. The Decibel (The Globe and Mail) [podcast]
 2023 Aug How do our eyes, skin and hair get their colors? Brains On! [podcast]
 2023 Jun Curly Hair Keeps Your Scalp Cooler. Science Friday [podcast]
 2023 Mar STEM Chat with Dr. Tina Lasisi and Dr. Kareem Edouard. BlackGirlNerds [podcast]

- 2023 Feb Melaninology (SKIN/HAIR PIGMENT) with Tina Lasisi. Ologies with Alie Ward [podcast]
- 2023 Feb “Why Does My Voice Sound Like This?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2023 Jan “Can We Change Our Body Type?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2023 Jan Why are we like this? Big Biology Podcast [podcast]
- 2022 Dec What’s in a Genome? The Quest to Decipher Human Difference. Undark Magazine [interviewed]
- 2022 Dec “Can Humans Change Their Sleep Cycle?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2022 Oct “Where Does Our Stress Come From?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2022 Sep “The Evolution of Hair Textures” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2022 Aug “Where Does My Skin Color Come From?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2022 Jul “How Did We Evolve a Sense of Smell?” Why Am I Like This? (PBS Terra) [host & writer]
- 2022 Jul What is Healthy Hair? BBC Crowdsience [podcast]
- 2022 May The Africa I Know: “The evolution of human hair variation and Black people in the field of biological anthropology” [interviewed]
- 2022 Feb Van Ness, J. Hair Variation, What’s Her Story? Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness [podcast]
- 2021 Dec Black Don’t Crack (S2:E3). In Those Genes [podcast]
- 2021 Dec The Future is Black AF (S2:E2.5). In Those Genes [podcast]
- 2021 Dec Black To The Future (S2:E2). In Those Genes [podcast]
- 2021 Oct Here’s a better way to talk about hair. In Short Wave. NPR [podcast]
- 2019 Oct SoS 51- A Hairy History with Tina Lasisi. Sausage of Science [podcast]
- 2019 Jul Bad hair days. In Super Awesome Science Show (SASS). Global News (Canada) [radio]
- 2019 Jun Episode 15: Why does human hair vary in shape and color around the world? (No. 15). The Arch & Anth Podcast [podcast]
- 2019 Apr What Does DNA Tell Us About Race? Forbes Magazine [cited in press]
- 2019 Apr Unraveling the History of Human Hair. Mental Floss [cited in press]

Membership in professional societies

American Association for Anthropological Genetics
 American Association of Biological Anthropologists
 American Society of Human Genetics
 Black in Biological Anthropology Collective
 Genetics Society of America
 Skin of Color Society

References

Nina G. Jablonski

Evan Pugh Professor of Anthropology
Pennsylvania State University
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Mark D. Shriver

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Pennsylvania State University
mds17@psu.edu

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