

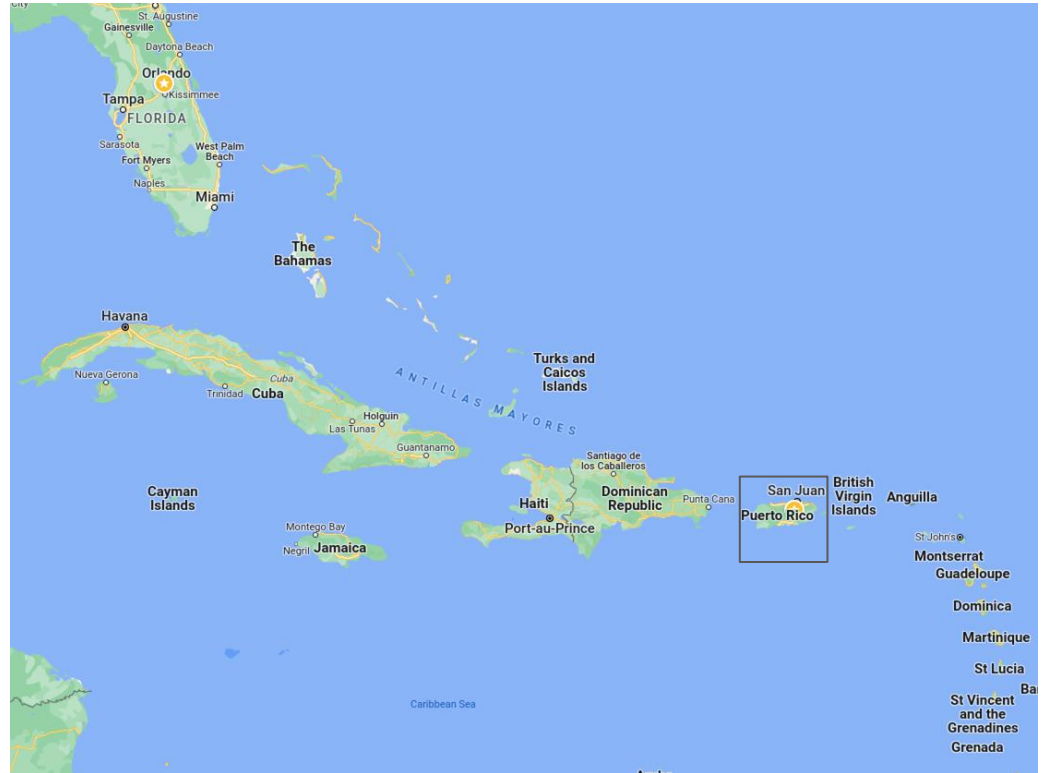


On Allowing Yourself to Wander

Luis Miguel de Jesús Astacio
Career Seminar Oct 2023
UIUC Physics

Before grad school

- From Puerto Rico



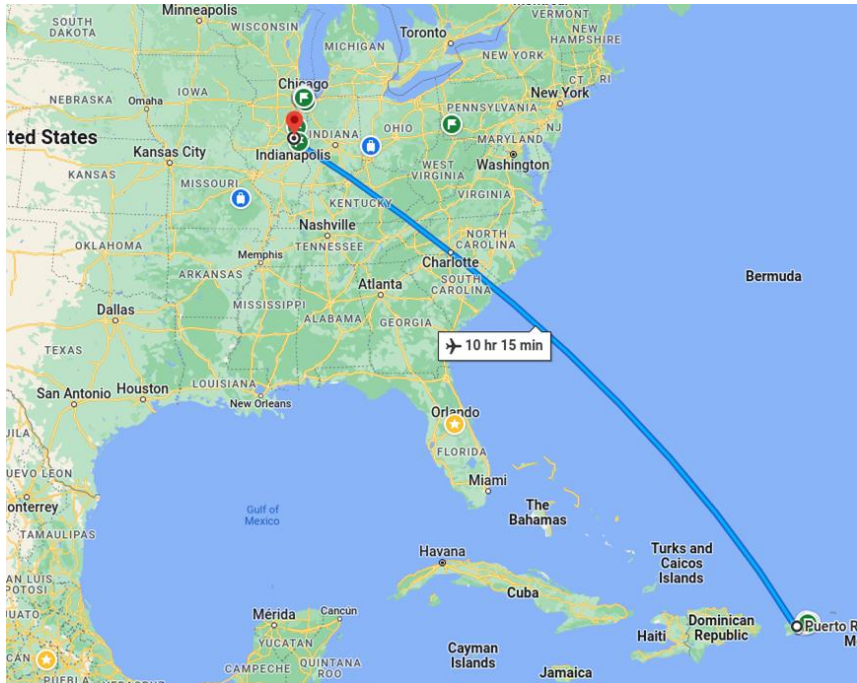
Before grad school

- From Puerto Rico
- BS Physics from University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras
- Interests in biophysics, particle physics and sociophysics



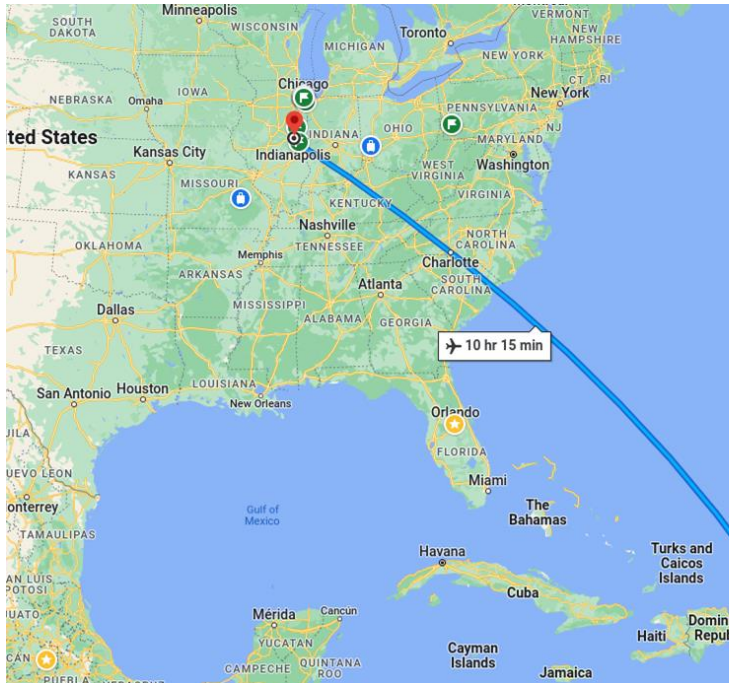
Starting grad school - UIUC

- Started PhD in 2017



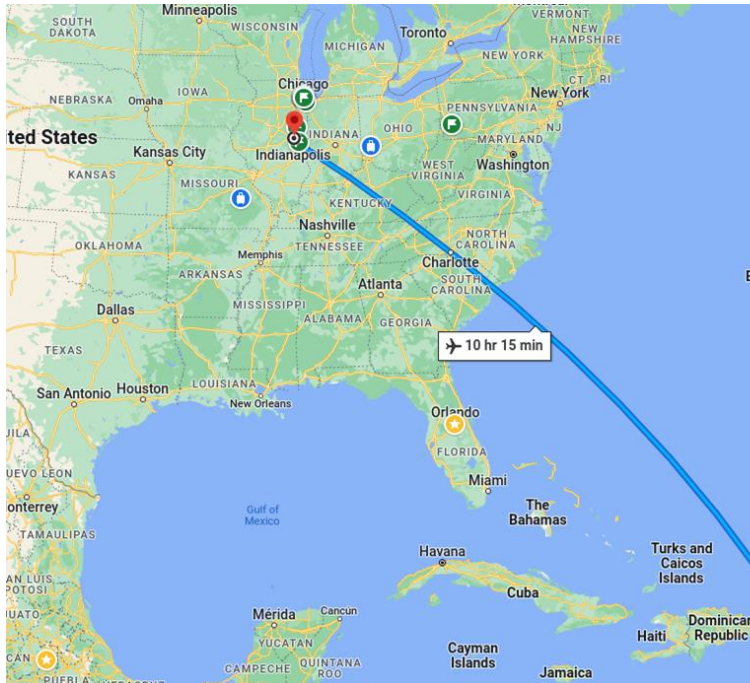
Starting grad school

- Started PhD in 2017



Starting grad school

- Started PhD in 2017

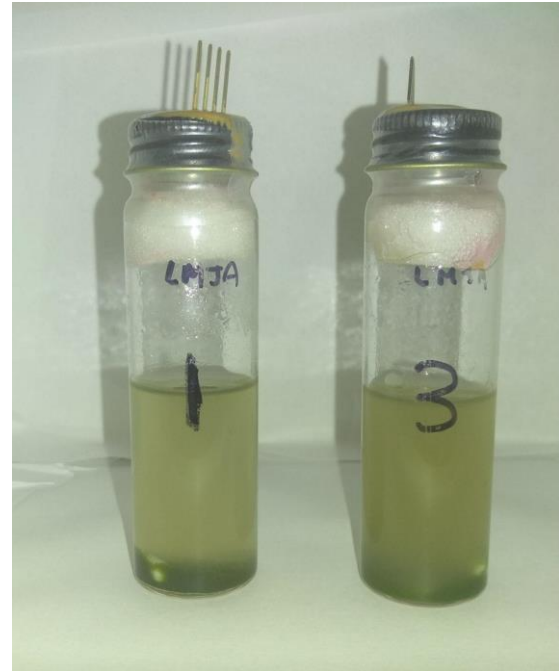


PhD research - microbial ecology @ Seppe Kuehn's

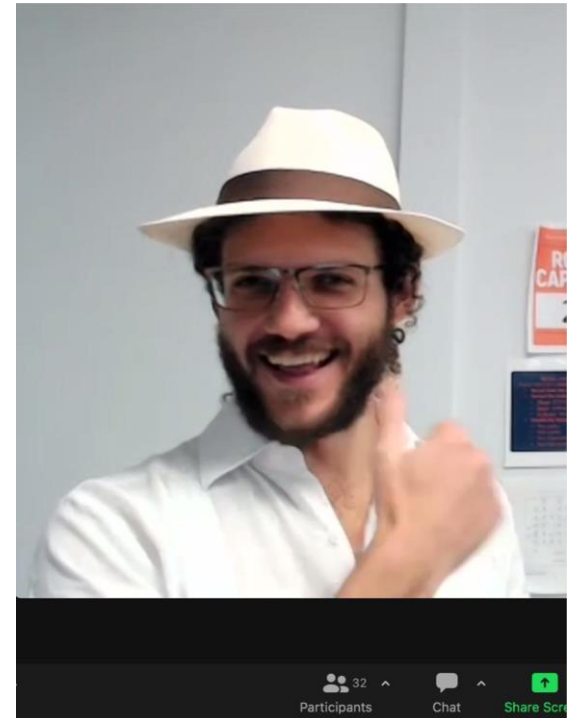


Image by Yasmine Steele for Illinois Physics

Nutrient recycling in closed ecosystems



Defended in December 2022!



What am I doing now?

- Assistant Professor at UPR-RP teaching biophysics
 - Designed course (how I wished it was taught to me)
- Quantitative Analyst at Banco Popular
 - Working at Wall Street of Puerto Rico
 - Validate "models"
- Access Network Co-organizer
 - Grant proposal as PI for new site at UPR
- Agroecology and self-sufficiency

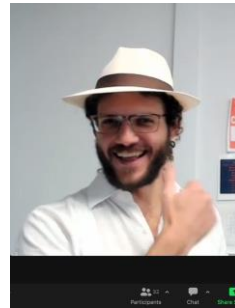
What happened in between?

2017

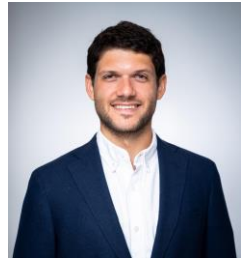


?

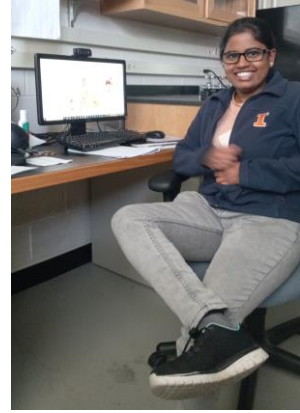
2022



2023



The Good: friendships, growth, CU



The Tough

- COVID pandemic - total disruption, isolation, health
- Father passed March 2020 - financial situation, emotional turmoil
- Lab migrated to UChicago June 2020
- Paper
 - 1st submission - March 2020 -> May 2020
 - 2nd submission - July 2020 -> Nov 2021
- New project August 2020
- Burnout, doubts, mental health, relationships

7000 miles- a motorcycle, a backpack and a tent



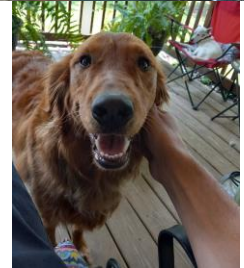
Motorcycle dead after 50 miles - Pittsfield, IL



Motorcycle dead after 50 miles and made some friends!



Beautiful relationships



Landscapes - dunes, mountains, desert, lakes, canyons, ocean



New perspectives



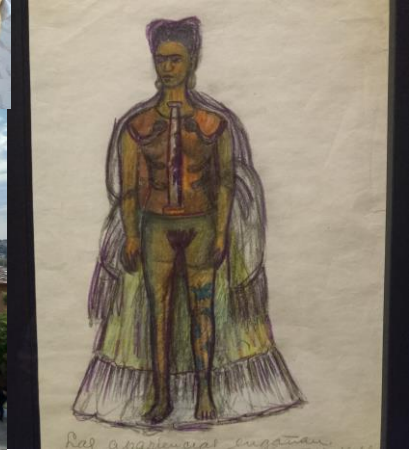
To México!

Clubes de Ciencia - México (CdeCMx)

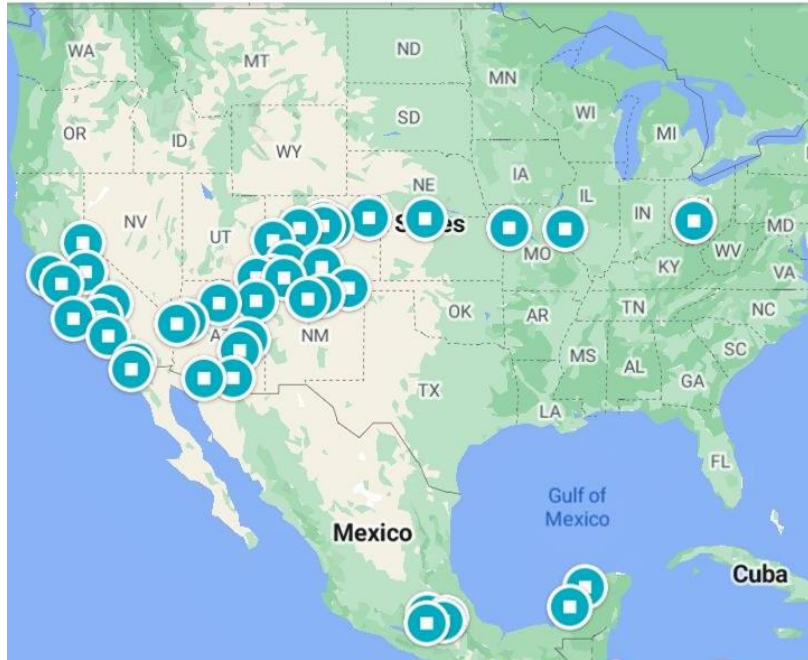
<https://clubesdeciencia.mx/>



México - culture, diversity, history, people



100+ days on the road to start healing



Outlook

- Foster a support system (advisor, Lance, colleagues, friends)
- Ok to wander; to try new things, to explore opportunities not considered before, to intentionally have no intentional plan
- Seek support before reaching your breaking point; repairing the break takes a lot of energy/time/effort
- Take a break!!
- Flowers bloom even in the middle of the desert



Thank you ... questions?

