

**Alumni Profile**

**Kathleen Charli Hibbert – Social Ecology PhD Program**



**Career**

Please provide a brief overview of your career path since graduating from UCI.

*After my graduation in 2013, I taught for two years as an adjunct lecturer at California State University, Stanislaus and Sonoma State, while doing a little research on the side. I then accepted a position as a post-doctorate social scientist at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the Office of Research and Development, and I continued with a little teaching on the side.*

What do you see yourself doing in five or ten years?

*Honestly, I have no idea where I see myself in the next 5 or 10 years. I love writing, I love research, and I love teaching. I have enjoyed performing these tasks in both, government and academic settings. I am not sure where I will end up after my post-doc assignment.*

**Your Time at UCI**

When did you attend UCI?

*2006 – 2013.*

What program were you in?

*I was one of the few people that got a degree in Social Ecology, with a concentration in Public Health and Epidemiology. During the period I was attending UCI, the school of Social Ecology had ended its program in Environmental Health Sciences and had not yet started the Program in Public Health, But I knew I wanted to work with Dr. Dele Ogunseitan to attempt to gain insight regarding the global electronic waste (eWaste) dilemma.*

Why did you choose to come to UCI?

*If I were to answer honestly, I would have to admit- the appeal of the Southern California beaches is on the list. But even more so, I was impressed with the faculty and the research that is happening at UCI. There are a lot of schools in the country that are known for their alumni, or their athletics, but UCI has an incredibly rich research portfolio. My interest in the School of Social Ecology was due to the very nature of the School being created out of the need for interdisciplinary work. Considering humans, our behaviors, our environments, our decisions, and our exposures...well that is just fascinating!*

## **Reflections**

What is your most memorable moment/experience at UCI?

*I can't forget searching for the "underground tunnels", or riding the shuttle to the beach, or But ultimately my strongest memory is a moment when I was walking across Aldrich park, and the weather was beautiful. I started to reflect on the numerous impressive professors I had the fortune to meet and their notable research endeavors. I looked around and saw the beauty that Southern California, and specifically the UCI campus had to offer and was reminded of the commitment UCI had to being sustainable. It was a few moments, where I realized and acknowledged that I was a part of something far greater than I had hope for... that I was fortunate to be an anteater. As a first-generation graduate student, I was proud of myself to be standing in Aldrich park amidst all the beauty and accomplishments that came before me.*

Did you do any research while at UCI and what was it?

*My dissertation work identified and quantified toxicants found in the ash of incinerated eWaste. This research confirmed that the ash resulting from eWaste incineration (typically from rudimentary recycling practices) could be a potential hazard for populations both near and far from the source due to the persistence and transport of the toxicants involved. This work contributed to the larger body of science that has determined improper disposal and dismantling of eWaste is a global public health concern.*

## **Alumni Life**

What advice do you have for a new graduate student?

*Don't wait until you finish graduate school to develop healthy habits to handle stress. Almost all my colleagues (myself included) found that we had developed many unhealthy habits of dealing with or ignoring stress. Most of us would agree, that the years of stress coupled with poor sleep and a constant need for achievement left our physical bodies feeling less than optimal and our minds exhausted. After graduating,*

*several of us are now running, meditating, journaling, etc. It is said that hindsight is 20/20; but seriously, if I had taken on some of the activities I do now to try to heal from the stress of graduate school back when I was actually in graduate school, I might not have felt so poorly by the time I graduated. Someone once told me "sometimes you're the bug, and sometimes you're the windshield" ... Well, graduate school felt like I was in a permanent 'bug scenario', and it probably would have benefited from activities that alleviate stress.*

What advice would you give to a current graduate student as they look towards their future careers?

*Be adaptable. I think having goals are necessary; but being open to taking on new challenges, willing to see different outcomes, and ending up in different places than envisioned, can be rewarding. I am still working on this, as I seem to be a bit more rigid (dare I say OCD). But honestly, some of my colleagues that have succumbed to adaptability more naturally are flourishing. And I am beginning to find this may be a crucial piece of the puzzle; the balance, not only between work and life, but between goal-oriented/focus driven and adaptability/willingness to see new opportunities.*

What are your hobbies/passions outside of your work/research?

*Outside of work, I am total foodie; I love to cook, watch cooking shows, eat out, and critique/review on Yelp. I also love to paint, meditate, refurbish furniture, and kayak.*

How do you balance work/life?

*I am still trying to achieve the work/life balance. Only a few years after the trenches of graduate school, I would classify my work/life proportional fluctuation as more bipolar-'esque' rather than balanced. I tend to have large swings from one to another rather than a daily coexistence...but I am always working on it.*