NASA CLASS Announced Collaboration with Actress Sheyene Gerardi to Address Technological Literacy

NASA’s Center for Lunar and Asteroid Surface Science (CLASS) announced an expanded collaboration with Venezuelan actress Sheyene Gerardi to advance space robotics through visionary, global participation in space.

NEW YORK (PRWEB) January 01, 2019 -- Sheyene Gerardi, a well-known Venezuelan soap opera star and model, has been appointed a member of NASA’s Center for Lunar and Asteroid Surface Science (CLASS) as the Lead for Robotics Outreach. This world-class institution of planetary scientists and space technologists invited Sheyene to join them because of her visionary work fusing space robotics technology development with humanitarian development on Earth.

Sheyene’s program addresses technological literacy in under-developed regions, creation of jobs in robotics, and advancement of technologies needed off-Earth. The program addresses a much larger concern, too, one that few have even considered: robotic industry on the Moon and Mars has such great potential for rapid scale-up that it could widen the gap between privileged and under-privileged to the point of causing great harm. Sheyene’s team is working to broaden the ownership of in-space industry as it develops, which will help solve all these problems.

Sheyene founded and operates a school to serve at-risk youth in an under-developed region of Venezuela. There, she has found systemic problems due to inadequate community support for education. Sheyene realized innovative methods are needed to motivate her students when she found out most of the children have very little hope for advancement in jobs or careers, and they do not see how education will change that.

In 2017, she met with the University of Central Florida. Sheyene recognized the space industry has great potential to improve life on Earth, but there is a strong chance the plight of people in underdeveloped regions will grow worse instead of better.

The concern is that once a supply chain is established through robots mining and manufacturing on the Moon or asteroids, it is outside the social and economic controls we have evolved for civilization on Earth. Within a few decades, advances in machine intelligence will make the robotics more autonomous, reducing the cost of labor to control the robots from Earth. According to a 2012 NASA study, it takes about this same amount of time for industry on the Moon or Mars to become an adequately self-sufficient supply chain to enable affordable scale-up, reducing the mass of materials that must be launched from Earth. The marginalization of labor from economic production is already a concern for terrestrial industry, but in space the isolation from normal economic and social restraints makes it much worse. Robotic space industry has potential to grow according to its “metabolism”, its throughput of matter and energy, without the usual economic and social controls. This can rapidly widen the gap between capital and labor, or between privileged and under-privileged following the lines of those who can participate in space and those cannot. Studies suggest this can occur as early as the middle of the century.

“As the economic revolution proceeds and production begins shifting first to robots on Earth and then to robots off-Earth, workers who don’t share ownership of the robots will be reduced to political powerlessness far worse than their conditions today. We have the opportunity to solve this problem during the bootstrapping period while human labor is still needed for space industry,” Sheyene says. Sheyene has added to this vision the theme
of entertainment, to connect the creative community with scientists and thus educate the public to support science. “I also came to believe I can have the greatest impact for change by focusing on my area of expertise: what entertainment contributes to solving these problems: a lot, as it turns out, we have the ability to show people what they can do to address these problems widely and efficiently. I have been working with my production and marketing team to develop an ‘educational entertainment production for social change.’ My team sees fantastic opportunities to produce content in and around the program we have started,” she added.

Sheyene’s concern for the plight of the economically disadvantaged grew out of her unique life story. She started as an actress and became internationally-known for her roles in Spanish telenovelas until she was struck by serious personal tragedy. A year after losing her family in an automobile crash, she was diagnosed with a Stage 4 lymphoma that had spread to 85% of her body. She survived after three years of difficult chemotherapy to become the only know survivor of a rare form of the disease. These experiences convinced her to focus the rest of her life on helping people in need. She founded and now operates two non-profit philanthropic foundations including Sheyene School, which began in Venezuela and has now expanded into multiple countries to expand technological literacy and to create a pipeline to jobs and economic participation in underdeveloped regions. Sheyene recently started a socially-conscious business to broaden the ownership of space industry as one of its major goals. The business plans to accelerate human expansion into space by advancing the robotic technologies, doing so in a way that conveys equity to all the participants.

Shashi Jain, from TiE young entrepreneurs, said of Sheyene’s work, “As a Senior Technical Marketing Engineer for over 18 years, I am deeply impressed by the value of the work that Sheyene is doing through her non-profit. She understands how to inspire people to not just love the subject matter, but to see the possibility of contributing to it in themselves through a few simple steps. This is a rare skill; you often get two of these at the same time, not all three.”

Sheyene’s work advancing robotics education globally resulted in her invitation to join the planetary scientists of NASA’s CLASS. The CLASS team consists of leading planetary scientists, geologists, geochemists, dynamos, engineers, physicists and other researchers from across the world, and is headed by Prof. Daniel T. Britt at the University of Central Florida. The CLASS network incorporates domestic institutions across the USA and international partner institutions in different countries. An integral part of the CLASS mission is to give back to the wider community.

“I have been following with great interest Sheyene’s activities in organizing world-wide robotics competitions. Her vision for expanding the scope and the impact of space science and engineering outreach dovetails strongly with the objectives of the Center for Lunar and Asteroid Surface Science. We are looking forward to working with Sheyene and are excited about the possibilities of the robotic competitions,” Prof. Daniel Britt said.

“People, in general, are unaware of the danger they are in, that with no way to personally go into space, no need for their labor in the face of robotic artificial intelligence, and no way to gain an ownership share in the industry, they will be left behind both economically and politically, creating a vastly deeper rift between the ‘Haves’ and the ‘Have-nots’. While the rift is already big today, it is seriously nothing compared to what it will be when industry is started in space and grows to massive proportions, unless steps are taken during the startup period,” Sheyene says. “Many solutions require an understanding of local pain points to solve economic and standard of living challenges every country is trying to solve to provide a better quality of life. I am glad and appreciative that with this synergy we can turn this initiative into a win for everyone. I feel the time is right,” she added.
Sheyene is advancing her plan to support both technological literacy and direct participation in space, through a robotics curriculum, which will be made freely available through her non-profit school. The team is also creating a series of robotics competitions, including secondary, college, and post-college events, with the goal of replicating it on a global scale. The technological progress achieved through the robotics competitions will be funneled back to NASA missions through her position in CLASS. Her participation with the SSERVI/CLASS network will facilitate her access to its cutting-edge scientific advances, enhancing the existing partnership she has with the Florida Space Institute, enabling her program to reach more people with the excitement of NASA space exploration to make a tangible difference in their lives.
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