CAREER PATHS IN COMPUTING

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Computing enabled me to . . .

Promote Sustainability and Help Underserved Communities

NAME

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BACKGROUND

**Born in St. Andrew, Jamaica;
now living in Kawasaki, Japan.**

CURRENT JOB TITLE/EMPLOYER

Co-founder and CEO of SIVENTH

EDUCATION

**MBA, McGill University, 2020;
BA, Drexel University, 2005**

SUSTAINABILITY, OR THE lack of it, is the greatest challenge threatening mankind. I believe protecting natural resources, livelihoods, and the rights of people across the world is a challenge worth fighting for. The United Nations recently issued Sustainable Development Goals to promote solutions for this threat. Computing, through a series of serendipitous events, has enabled me to join this fight, leading me to found my own social enterprise startup, SIVENTH.

The story of how computing brought me to this point begins in Newburgh, once called the “Murder Capital of New York.” I immigrated to America as a child with my parents and became one of the “Dreamers” under DACA. For Jamaicans like me, Newburgh was a place of opportunity, filled with friends and family who

had come before us. Newburgh taught me tenacity and perseverance, which is still a part of my core. I’ve lost a shocking number of friends and family to violence and prison. Those who don’t wind up dead or in jail usually end up in the military or with a local job. A few, like myself, were fortunate enough to make it out.

Through the strength of my parents, in particular my mother, my family bought a computer in 1993 when I was 10 years old. The device sparked my passion for technology with its seemingly infinite capabilities. When I entered high school, I enrolled in every computer class offered: Fortran, QBasic, Visual Basic.

Toward the end of high school, while looking into which military branch to join, a counselor introduced me to the *National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering* Scholarship. I attended Drexel University on this scholarship and received a degree in Information Systems and Technology. Drexel had an amazing co-op program that allowed me to try out roles in three different companies. Because of the program, I began to figure out what I wanted to do long term. After graduating, I explored different roles, always searching for whatever would satisfy my interest in computing and technology.

Eventually, I moved to Japan to work in software development for KDDI Web Communications (KMC). The largest earthquake in Japan’s recorded history occurred just three days after I moved there in 2011. As a result, many local communities were forced to shut down. Wanting to help bring people together, I founded two communities: *DevJapan* for developers and *Design Japan* for designers. My network of contacts grew tremendously, and I eventually became involved

in hosting large tech conferences, such as Nikkei/SUM and Pioneers Asia in Tokyo. I left KWC after six years to join Rakuten as a Tech Evangelist and became even more involved in organizing and speaking at large events and conferences.

These conferences would often put me in the same room as many entrepreneurs, CEOs, and executives from various companies. Conversations with them inspired me to enroll in a Business Administration master’s program at McGill University’s campus in Tokyo. One of my courses focused on how companies could leverage their strategies for developing countries to help the local population while generating greater than expected profits. The professor of this course (Paola Perez-Aleman), along with all my past experiences—working with executives and various startups, growing up in a rough neighborhood, experiencing poverty as a child in Jamaica—drove me to start SIVENTH. While pursuing my MBA, I left Rakuten and founded this social enterprise so the culmination of my experiences could be dedicated to others rather than any one firm’s bottom line.

SIVENTH’s mission is to reduce inequality in underserved communities by leveraging technology to create solutions. Through the development of a sustainability training and simulation tool, we’ve been able to guide corporations toward sustainability by interpreting their industry specific value chains. Additionally, our cloud distribution architecture ensures people everywhere have continuous access to our platform.

I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for my mother deciding to purchase that first computer so many years ago. Happy Mother’s Day, Mom. **G**