--\*Instagram: myradeng

--Favorite quote: “You can’t ever reach perfection, but you can believe in an asymptote toward which you are ceaselessly striving.” -Paul Kalanithi

--Tell us a little about yourself along with a fun fact.

I’m originally from the suburbs of DC, and am currently a sophomore studying computer science at Columbia University. I always find myself slightly surprised (but mostly grateful) that I am where I am today. Entering freshman year, I had no prior knowledge of CS and a tenuous grasp at best of what I wanted to do with my life. At some point during my first CS course however, I realized that the practice of coding represents so much more than the code itself: it embodies a mindset that thrives off intellectual creativity and stubborn perseverance, a mindset that continually excites me and has gradually become my own. Since my freshman year, I’ve applied my computer science knowledge to graph theory research, joined Columbia ADI Labs where I worked with three other students on a web-app, and most recently worked on Columbia Girls Who Code’s teaching team. This summer, I’ll be working in California (west coast, best coast?) on a software engineering project, and I’m excited to learn more about what’s out there! A fun fact about me is that I’ve played piano since I was 4 years old, so classical music will always hold a special place in my heart.

--What # (hashtag) would define your life journey? #nodaysoff

--Favorite website / app: Snapchat + Instagram!

--Someone who inspires you and knowledge they have imparted (if any):

My mom and dad. From a young age, my dad would shower me with books, magazine articles, and math puzzles. Only now am I immensely grateful for the wealth of knowledge he imparted on me. I have never met someone who is so passionately driven by a desire to learn, and who so truly appreciates the gift of knowledge. Because of him, I am never hesitant to dig deeper, or to explore uncharted intellectual territory. From my mom, I’ve learned the immense impact of compassion. Our understanding of knowledge and of ourselves is ultimately built upon the relationships we build with the people around us. My mom’s empathy, dedication, and loyalty serves as a constant reminder of the sort of humanity that is always necessary in the world.

--Song that makes you want to dance: Any early 2000’s throwback!

--Technical and/or life challenge you've faced and how you overcame it: There’s definitely a bit of a steep learning curve for anyone who is just being exposed to the computer science field (or any field for that matter), and that hurdle manifested itself for me throughout my freshman year as I was deciding whether computer science would be the right career path for me. One of the most intimidating feelings in the world is thinking that everyone else is better or smarter than you- this sort of imposter syndrome becomes toxic and restricting, making you lose touch with the fact that it is never too late to start something new so long as you are passionate about it. I learned to use the excitement and novelty of my newly discovered interest in computer science as an asset which continually inspired me to learn more and to take advantage of the opportunities around me. I’m definitely still learning - from my teachers, my peers, and myself, but I also feel strongly as if I belong where I am - and that is the most powerful thing you can do for yourself.

--Ideal job / where you see yourself in 10 years: I’m still just beginning to explore my options, but I would like to end up in working with something related to the intelligent systems field (AI, machine learning, etc). I’d also like to have spent some time leading/ founding a startup, as well as exploring the various applications of civic tech. Ultimately, I want to have made or begun to make a lasting impact on the lives of others through my contributions.

--What knowledge would you impart to women in order for them to REIGN their lives? From the admittedly limited experience I’ve had, my advice would be to truly believe your own worth. You are capable of incredible things once you tear down the restraints blurring your sense of confidence. In that vein, don’t be afraid to reach out to almost anyone around you - for help when you’re learning, for support when you’re struggling, for congratulations when you’re succeeding. Be bold and be brave.