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Meeting... Romello Goodman, Senior Software Engineer at The New York Times

“Meeting...” is an ongoing series that features New York Times employees from different corners of the company.

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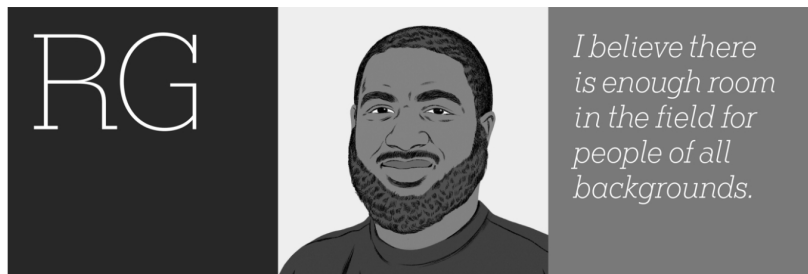


Illustration by Claire Merchlinsky

What are your pronouns?

He/Him

What is your job title and does it mean?

Senior Software Engineer on the UX Foundations Team. We work to ensure that The Times delivers a cohesive cross-platform user experience worthy of our journalism.

How long have you been at The Times?

Since April, 2019.

Most Times employees are working remotely right now. What does working from home look like for you?

I was working remotely from Washington, D.C. before the pandemic started, but it's still been a big change. Before the pandemic, I would spend most of my time at coffee shops throughout the city and generally try to structure the majority of my day outside of my apartment.

Not being able to go to coffee shops meant I had to invest in my work space and get an office set up. When my partner started working from home, things got a little cramped in our one-bedroom apartment and we had to shift our furniture daily to create more space. Eventually, we moved to a two-bedroom apartment where we could have a dedicated office space, and that helped by creating a clearer boundary between work and home life.

How do you start your day?

I usually wake up and do some creative coding sketching while making

coffee. Around the middle of last year, I got introduced to the creative coding library P5.js and I was instantly hooked. As a kid, I was always doodling on scrap paper, then in high school and college I did graphic design for various school clubs. I'll usually use a platform like Observable, where I can code really quickly to try out a few different ideas until it's time to start work. Sketching allows me to exercise some of my old graphic design skills while kick starting my brain with a little puzzle each morning.

What is something you've worked on recently?

Earlier this year, I updated the Live Coverage CMS to use our internal design system called Ink. The Ink project is employee-led and is really cool because it allows us to create a consistent look and feel for all of our internal tools. As an engineer, Ink streamlines my job by providing reusable code.

Tell us about a project you've worked on at The Times that you're especially proud of.

Much of The Times's 2020 election coverage was powered by the tools built by the Storylines team. It was really cool to see the culmination of everything my team worked on that year in the year's most important event.

What is the biggest challenge you faced in your career and how did you overcome it? Knowing what you know now, would you do things differently?

Having to deal with pay inequity as an underrepresented person in tech. In the past I've struggled with understanding the value that I bring to organizations and the unique view point I present as a queer Black man. It's a constant journey, but knowing what I know now, I am able to advocate for myself and I make sure others can do the same.

What was your first job?

I sold candy in high school! Career-wise, my first job was as a back-end engineer at Legacy.com. I transitioned from an internship there right after graduation and got a lot of exposure to tools like React and GraphQL that were cutting-edge at the time, but have since become industry standard.

What is something most people don't know about you?

I'm left-handed.

Do you have any favorite life hacks or work shortcuts?

My number one life hack is going for runs when it's hot out. You sweat more and get to run less.

What is your superpower?

Putting my teammates' happiness and well-being before the company's bottom line.

What or who are you inspired by?

People who continue to show up and do the work even when it isn't clear that progress is being made.

Complete this sentence: Over time, I have realized _____.

Most complicated things are actually pretty simple, but gatekeepers are incentivized to make them seem complicated

incentivized to make them seem complicated.

What is your best advice for someone starting to work in your field?

You don't need to be passionate about programming. There's a trope that the field is full of genius programmers who have been writing code since they were children. I believe there is enough room for those people and also those who have historically lacked that exposure and who have only recently discovered programming. It's 100 percent normal and valid to see this as a job and programming doesn't need to be your passion.

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112



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