



#172: Black Tech Mecca

Date September 8, 2015

Sponsor [Code for America](#)

Presenters

- Fabian Elliott, Black Tech Mecca
- Corey Thurman, Black Tech Mecca
- Myron Hicks, Black Tech Mecca

Event page

Some things to know

- There will be food! You are also welcome to take up to 2 drinks from the 'everyone' refrigerator.
- Braintree space: We are free to use the auditorium, small offices directly next to it, and the cafeteria.
- [Twitter](#) and [Flickr](#): share using the **#chihacknight** hashtag. Follow us [@chihacknight](#)
- Website: [ChiHackNight.org](#)
- Google Group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/chihacknight>
- Weekly email: <http://eepurl.com/z65hn>
- Join our [Slack](#) channel: <http://slackme.chihacknight.org>
- Wifi Password: PayPalGuest / SafePayments

Agenda

- 6:00 pm** Eating and socializing
- 6:15 pm** Welcome, introductions & meet your neighbor
- 6:30 pm** Announcements
- 6:40 pm** Presentation
- 7:15 pm** Highlight breakout groups
- 7:30 pm** Break into groups and hack

Announcements

Share your civic tech news, events, projects and job opportunities!

- Chicago Justice Project Release Party & Fundraiser @ Revolution Brewing on 9/28 from 6-8pm. You can register online @ <http://www.events.org/cpage.aspx?e=90035> - Release of our new site "Chicago Police Board Information Center"
- Loqalus is looking for developers who are interested in joining us in our mission to democratize finance and empower local communities! We are a community hub which uses crowdfunding, social networking, and web-based chat to foster the growth of local communities. Our site takes advantage of existing neighborhood ties and strengths with innovative features which facilitate

discussion, collaboration, and investment. If you like what I've said so far and would like to learn more, please contact me (Carlos Currea) in person tonight or reach out to me via my contact info. We're onto something incredible here, and we're just looking for passionate people who want to make a difference in the world... from the ground up! >> (847) 890-2859, exlos@outlook.com

- Interested in Chicago building / property data? Check out <https://github.com/chihacknight/edifice>, which provides scripts (using Datamade's awesome [dedupe](#) and [usaddress](#) libraries) for linking Chicago building footprint data with Cook County addresses and tax assessment data.
 - A .csv with the linked data (about 425,000 records) is available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/edifice-data/edifice-9-8-2015.csv>
 - Dedupe training files used to produce the above dataset are also available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/edifice-dedupe/training-8-31-15/address_matching_training.js on and <https://s3.amazonaws.com/edifice-dedupe/training-8-31-15/dedupe.settings>
- On September 18th and 19th, there will be a data learnathon, focusing on introducing introductory and intermediate data cleaning, mapping, and basic analysis tutorials. It will be hosted at Harold Washington Library from 9 to 5p on each day. Friday's session will be focused on "data analysis" by working with the Open Data Portal, OpenRefine, Microsoft Excel, and CartoDB. On Saturday, a more advanced series of tutorials will use Python to conduct analysis, building statistical models, visualize, and create a small web app (using data from the portal). The sessions are free to the public. To register, visit <http://datapeoplechicago.com/>.
- [Thoughtworks is hiring for 2016](#)
- The Census' American Community Survey 2014 1-year data release is Sept 17. There will be a online workshop Sept 10 on the data and using it. Info <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-152.html>

Presentation notes

Please help us take notes on the presentation!

Presentation slides:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/119OfbR1Ds1J-cTsQ7hYJUR_TFyXQ3AD-W8fO9cGJTpc/edit#

Black Tech Mecca

Fabian, Cory and Myron

BTM Background

Transfrom Chicago into the global Black Tech Mecca

Why Chicago?

Makup of black community (heart of the US Black Community) but 25% unemployment, 34% under poverty line

Good tech

City has digital economy strategy

How?

Connect and direct strategy

Connect the black tech community (directory on steroids)

Ecosystem Network

Where we are?

create directory

get black tech to sign up

Engage community

GETting enough people with the right type of skills is a challenge

Roadmap

Launched at Google 2015

Alpha development/team buildout

Evaluate Solution

Next Steps

Don't have the manpower in house

Hackathon to get more people and ideas involved

1. Presenters

- a. Fabian - also works AdTech for Google
- b. Corey - at Disaster Risk Management at JPMorgan
- c. Myron - also Software Engineer at Federal Reserve Bank
- d. Team is only a few months old
- e. Media coverage from Chicago Tribune, DNAInfo, and Black Enterprise (National)

2. BTM Background

- a. What is BTM?
 - i. Transform Chicago into the global Black Tech Mecca
 - ii. Mecca = Environment conducive to your success
 - iii. How can we make Chicago a beacon in the black community? In the tech community? In the world?
- b. Why Chicago?
 - i. The Black Community
 1. Huge nucleus of the black community in Chicago
 2. Also many affluent and influential black members in Chicago
 3. 25% unemployment rate
 4. 30% of the black community in Chicago below the poverty line
 - ii. Tech Community
 1. Incubators, makerspaces, etc. popping up all over
 - iii. City of Chicago
 1. City has a great strategic digital economic plan
- c. How?
 - i. Ecosystem Framework: Connect and Direct
 - ii. How do we get people in the Black and Tech communities to know each other?

3. Black Tech Mecca Ecosystem Network

- a. What's the special sauce? What keeps people coming back?
- b. How can we make BTM more than just a contact directory?

4. Next Steps

- a. Does BTM have the manpower to build this ecosystem in house?
- b. Wants to develop a hackathon to generate new ideas and get people involved in BTM
 - i. If interested in Hackathon, visit blacktechmecca.org or Twitter or Facebook
 - ii. Create a platform for the community by the community

5. Q&A

- a. Once you have the platform, who are you looking to partner with?
 - i. 1871, Google, other companies: Help the black tech community navigate the resources that are available to them
 - ii. The volume of opportunities at local, state, and national levels can be overwhelming
- b. How much are you going to build platform-wise that just a LinkedIn Group wouldn't offer? Why not focus on social programs and outreach?
 - i. Issue with a platform like LinkedIn: how do you navigate that group effectively? Connect with people most relevant to you?
 - ii. In addition to contacts, BTM wants to provide data as well as help members understand what they mean to each other.
- c. Can you expand on how these tools will reach out to constituents who are not online, especially those who are unemployed?
 - i. If you lay the income map of Chicago over the race map, they're the same. Lay over the internet access map over, and it's the same.
 - ii. "It's like someone's just changing the map titles" ← shots
 - iii. BTM is focused on who in the black tech community does have access and how they can leverage their access to get others involved
- d. BTM should be commended for their work! What lessons are you learning from past social media efforts? Black Twitter, other integrations, etc.
 - i. BTM is taking a more authentic approach: its leaders represent the models and mentors of the black tech community, not just some random people making a website and expecting people to come.
 - ii. Main reason for the hackathon is to get all the ideas in the same room, avoid branching and segmentation within the movement.
 - iii. BTM's focus is to help people, not just connect people like some dating site
 - iv. Shout out to Keith: lead developer for the BTM MVP
- e. Having strong mentors made a big difference to me. Are you thinking about extending opportunities to high school students?
 - i. At JPMorgan, the BOLD (Black Organization Leadership Development) program is a good example of strong mentoring.
 - ii. City-wide initiative to teach intro to CS classes at all grade levels
- f. Maven (?) a hair product company that markets particularly to African Americans had a lot of success in Chicago, indicating that Chicago could be a strong BTM.
 - i. Something about VCs.

- g. With “Mecca” in the title, is BTM trying to attract and relocate people from other areas to come to Chicago?
 - i. BTM’s approach is two-fold:
 - 1. Refine and improve the homefront to better serve the people here
 - 2. Make Chicago a friendly environment for others in the black tech community to come to
 - a. Chicago BT community can help newcomers adjust
 - b. What happens now, black tech people get picked up and moved to Silicon Valley, away from their family, and it disrupts their lives
 - c. Want to create a BTM where our community is already located
- h. Are you looking to get licenses with companies and entities?
 - i. BTM wants to connect individuals as well as connect entities
 - ii. Prevent parts of the BT community from operating in silos
- i. How do you avoid cannibalizing other programs working in the same area?
 - i. Our vision is to have the biggest black tech conference of all time happen in Chicago
 - ii. BTM wants to be careful not to step on the toes of their partners who are doing good work
 - iii. Have a State of the Black Tech Community (like SOTU) every year in January to empower everyone
- j. We want to make recommendations when there are things missing in the BTM
- k. Are you interested in getting help from the Chi Hack Night group specifically? And if yes, are you into open source? Because we kind of are ;)
- l. What is the biggest misconception your organization faces and how do you respond to it?
 - i. Big problem: lots of people are really excited about the BTM, but can’t articulate what the mission is and means
 - ii. BTM Marketing and Communications Team is currently doing an internal brand audit
 - iii. Some of the most diehard BTM supporters can’t actually articulate the mission
 - iv. Struggling to figure out where we fit in with all the other Black Tech Initiatives in Chicago and not compete with them
 - v. Another thing: We are not an incubator!