

Femi Faoye '08

DEGREE: B.A. in sociology

JOB TITLE: CEO and co-founder of D.R.E.A.M. (Developing Responsible Economically Advanced Model Citizens)

FAVORITE TRINITY MEMORY: My favorite Trinity memory was planning and hosting the first annual Trinity Men of Color Alliance Talent Show in the fall of 2005. The show attracted acts from all over the Connecticut area and has grown drastically since its inception. Another fond memory was being invited to attend the annual Posse Retreat in the spring semester of 2006. The event provides an opportunity for members of the Trinity community to discuss issues regarding leadership, diversity, and inclusion on our campus. In that particular year, President Jones attended, and he announced the College had received a large donation for advancing diversity—it was a pretty momentous occasion.



REPORTER: When did you start D.R.E.A.M. and why?

FAOYE: I co-founded D.R.E.A.M. in October 2009, on the heels of the recent financial crisis. My business partner and I have been friends for over 13 years, and we're both from the inner city of NYC. We grew up in urban neighborhoods and had direct insight to the effects of financial illiteracy on the lives of urban citizens. In 2008, unemployment in urban areas was rapidly increasing and foreclosures were occurring at alarming rates. As recent college graduates and new Wall Street professionals, my business partner and I had the opportunity to acquire a skill set regarding finances that many of our urban peers lacked. With a growing desire to give back to our communities, I set out on a quest to follow my dream—to empower urban citizens through knowledge of their finances. I knew that to cause a lasting change, I needed to focus on the next generation. As a result, D.R.E.A.M.'s target demographic is urban youth between the ages of 12-18. We tailor financial information to them in a way that they can understand. We've also expanded into the middle school and young adult market, but high school youth remains our target demographic.

REPORTER: How do you accomplish D.R.E.A.M.'s mission?

FAOYE: D.R.E.A.M.'s mission is to empower underrepresented, urban youth by equipping them with the knowledge to become prudent, financially literate, adept individuals. We achieve this through two core initiatives: Invest-in-Success and Financial Empowerment: 101. Invest-in-Success is a three-year program for high school students in which they enroll during their sophomore year, and they continue through senior year. In year one of the program, we lay the foundation of their financial tool kit, teaching them the basics such as budgeting

and saving. In the second year we teach them about investing and the stock market. What's unique about our program is that by the end of year two, the students own at least one share of a publicly traded company. In year three we focus on how to make the college of their choice an affordable option. As part of the program, students also manage a portion of our endowment; each month they meet as a committee to make investment decisions.

The second initiative, Financial Empowerment: 101, features specialized courses that we conduct in partnership with schools, churches, and other community-based organizations. These on-demand courses vary in topic and are customized to the needs and learning speed of our constituents. Topics can range from how to create an effective savings strategy to how to begin investing in the stock market.

REPORTER: What is the most gratifying part of your work?

FAOYE: The most gratifying part of my role is having the opportunity to make a positive impact in my community and on the lives of urban citizens. I have appreciated the chance I have been given to merely serve as an usher on the path to financial literacy for hundreds of youth.

REPORTER: Does D.R.E.A.M. have any plans for expansion?

FAOYE: As part of our strategic plan, our goal is to expand into five states within five years. Our next target city is Chicago, which we plan to be in by the end of summer 2013. Following that the next target is Newark, New Jersey. We are strategically choosing locations given the urban demographics and the size of their respective underrepresented ethnic populations. We are targeting areas that need finan-

cial literacy education the most. We understand that our expansion is ambitious, but we have no doubt that we can achieve it.

REPORTER: Do you work outside of D.R.E.A.M.?

FAOYE: When people ask me what my full-time job is, I always state D.R.E.A.M. since it's where my heart and passion is. But it's actually not my paying job, despite the full-time responsibilities it demands. I work on Wall Street as an institutional sales professional. I also own and operate Millennial Capital Management, an investment management firm catering to low-income and middle-class individuals.

REPORTER: Was there anyone at Trinity who had an effect on what you're doing today?

FAOYE: Yes, Professor Theresa Morris was my academic adviser for sociology. I am very thankful for the guidance and direction she provided with my long-term interests in mind. Notably, she recommended that I take "Sociology 206: Organizing by Neighborhood." As a component of the class, I had the opportunity to complete an internship at the Community Economic Development Fund located in Hartford. Through this experience I was able to gain working knowledge of nonprofit management and to see the measurable impact of financial education in an urban community.

I always thought that nonprofit work would be something I would do after a long career on Wall Street making millions of dollars. In 2009, when the opportunity arose, I realized that time is of the essence. Why wait till the end of your career to make a difference? I am appreciative of the impact that Professor Morris and Trinity College had on me in guiding me to follow my passions.

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