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"One Investigative Narrative at a Time": How ThePLUG Amplifies the Black Tech Community

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By Courtney Gabrielson

July 03, 2019, 11:30am EDT

Local thought leader, journalist and entrepreneur Sherrell Dorsey founded [ThePLUG](#), an investigative startup media company for all things black tech, as a side endeavor three years ago when she was just starting a new job.

"I started ThePLUG while I was in Charlotte, I found my managing editor in Charlotte ... [the outlet] was born and bred in Charlotte proper," the Seattle native and founder of [BLKTECH INTERACTIVE](#) explained.

Fast forward to 2019, and the company, which offers data-driven reporting, a newsletter and more, has grown in leaps and bounds. It has partnered [with Vice Media's tech vertical, Motherboard](#). Dorsey is an acclaimed speaker. Capital One [came on as a sponsor](#) in 2017.

"We're going to tell more than just stories, we're going to humanize the damning reports on diversity and inclusion in tech to foster change within the culture of the industry, one investigative narrative at a time."

Regardless of size or scope, ThePLUG's mission is still the same: "to do deep reporting on the black innovation economy," Dorsey said. "The way we define [that is] those economic development initiatives, the training, the technologists, the startups, the policies — all those things that truly affect black people across the U.S."

It's a resource that she wants readers to use to stay on top of who is doing what across the country, and provide them with a more diverse and accurate representation of the tech community at large.

When interacting with most media, "I didn't see vast representation, let alone black people, or diversity in general," Dorsey said. "There was room for better reporting."

So she asked herself: "If we were to create the Black Wall Street Journal, what would that look like?"

Dorsey figured finding out was worth a try. \$10, a domain name and a Mailchimp account later, ThePLUG was born.

She outlined a general roadmap for the entity in her [Editor's Note](#), where she wrote the following: "We're going to tell more than just stories, we're going to humanize the damning reports on diversity and inclusion in tech to foster change within the culture of the industry, one investigative narrative at a time."

ThePLUG does this with the help of Tyler Young, its managing editor, as well as a team of freelancers and an assistant editor. They all work remotely, with different writers hailing from different parts of the world (the U.K., Nigeria, San Francisco and more).

Growing this team is part of Dorsey's goals for the enterprise, as well as expanding ThePLUG's data-driven reporting arm.

"We don't have a ton of measurement as to who has raised what, how many black tech startups exist in the country, how much has been raised," Dorsey said. "There are few groups that collect that information ... [so] we want to play in that arena in a big way."

Widening the geographical scope of this research is also on the docket.

"How can we [cover the] diaspora, not just North American reporting?" she said. "I want to be looking at what's happening in terms of the Caribbean, emerging markets in Lagos and Cape Town and other parts of Africa, Latin America ... We have some learning to do, but our goal is to report there as well."

In the meantime, ThePLUG will continue to produce editorial on everything from ["Black Tech Startups to Watch at CES"](#) to the [first black woman appointed as general counsel of a digital currency marketplace](#).

All that aside — news stories and goals and plans and subscription numbers — Dorsey said success boils down to how ThePLUG makes more space at the table.

"How are we defining the space?" she asked. "Are we creating a lens for leadership that didn't exist? Changing narratives for black and brown founders?"

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