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# Interview with Daphne Ewing-Chow

By: *Krystal Penny Bowen*

6-8 minutes

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As the world celebrates International Women's Day (IWD) today, we feature the stories of talented and professional women in the region.

Daphne Ewing-Chow who grew up in Barbados is a senior contributor at Forbes, a global media company. For Daphne, she is more than a writer, a mother, a woman of the region – her goal is to use her unique voice and diverse background to make a difference in her community. Recently, *The Barbados Advocate* spoke to Daphne about her early life, her career, gender issues within the workplace and community and her professional mission for 2020.

**Q. Tell me a little about your upbringing, where you grew up, education and your path to Forbes.**

A. My parents both spent their formative years in Eastern Europe (Hungary and Romania) and migrated to Israel as teens. Business interests took them to the Caribbean before I was born, and they relocated to Barbados when I was three-years-old. I did pre-school straight through to O'levels (at Harrison College) in Barbados and completed my tertiary education in the United States. Given my

background, I developed a strong interest in the study of diversity and international development. I majored in Sociology and African studies at the University of Michigan and then received a Masters in International Economics at Columbia University. In the years after completing my Masters, I travelled from the Cayman Islands, to Trinidad and to Barbados, working in the finance sector but I never felt fulfilled. I was certain of two things – I loved the Caribbean and I loved to write. At first, it was a hobby and then I was offered an increasing number of corporate and media jobs. I gave up finance and started working full-time as a writer.

Eventually, I married my love for the Caribbean, my social purpose and my writing, and began to exclusively take on jobs that focused on social, economic and environmental issues. While I was working for the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), an editor from Forbes happened to come across some of my work on LinkedIn and offered me a contract with a focus on Food and Sustainability. This platform has honestly been one of the most rewarding opportunities of my life as I am giving the amazing people and countries of the English speaking Caribbean global exposure. I have the power to make real and lasting changes in the region, and I don't take this lightly at all.

**Q. Tell me what is it like to be a mother in the 21st century raising your children and also pursuing your career? How do you find work-life balance?**

A. As a mother of three young ladies, ages 15, 13 and 11, I have struggled with the guilt that comes with being an all or nothing person. I have always been highly driven and when I am "in a zone" I tend to block everything out, especially as a writer where my livelihood depends on my ability to focus. The fantasy of a

work-life balance has to date been highly elusive. I try to be the best mother I can, I give my all to my work and I try to give back to my community. At any given time, something has got to give. I am frequently plagued with guilt, especially when I travel for work. Most of my female friends from a variety of professional backgrounds are faced with the same balancing act that leaves each of us to feel as if we are “failing” in one area or other. I personally do not believe that men are as hard on themselves, but perhaps that has changed a bit with the times.

**Q. What are your plans in 2020 to complete your mission, what areas are you looking to focus on?**

A. Greater access to knowledge from as wide a variety of sources will aid in my goal to tell the stories of those whose stories frequently do not get told. To achieve this I would like to travel more. I would like to have more frequent communication with regional governments and non-governmental organisations. I also want to be further immersed in the lives of people, and women in particular, from throughout the Caribbean and other small island developing states, as these experiences provide me with a great deal of perspective. I understand the power of being able to connect the dots – this is my strength as a storyteller and the more dots I have to connect the more accurate the picture I can draw.

**Q. It is often believed that women have always had an opportunity to thrive via the route of entrepreneurship? How are you using your writing to highlight this element particularly in the Caribbean?**

A. Entrepreneurship is something that I believe has left many women marginalised. The Caribbean is no exception. The more I

am exposed to grassroots Caribbean entrepreneurship, I find myself inspired by examples of perseverance and innovation that to me are so much more impressive than the stories of entrepreneurs who have “overcome the odds” in resource-endowed countries – and not all of them are women. Many Caribbean men and women embody an awe-inspiring entrepreneurial spirit, but what is lacking is guidance, resources/support and examples of success – especially among women and the poor and particularly in rural areas. I am using my gift of storytelling to promote, teach and inspire – and given my digital platform, these stories are accessible by all. I want Caribbean people to see their own doing great things on a global scale – I want them to know that their creativity and resilience is of interest to people all over the world. It goes without saying that stories of women are under-represented in this field and I am doing my best to overcome this discrepancy.

**Q. What advice will you give to young girls and women in the Caribbean who are growing up in a society which still continues to limit their opportunities or criticise them for breaking the mould?**

A. I believe that the most important advice – something I frequently tell my daughters – is that to achieve your true purpose in life, you must be authentic. We are often directed towards opportunities that conform to the social paradigm with which we are most familiar. A girl from a conservative family might be told that she should strive to become a mother and find a “good” husband. A girl from a family of immigrants might be told to seek a career that makes a lot of money so that she can support herself and/ or her relatives back home. I am all too familiar with these pressures. If

we allow society, our teachers or our families to dictate what professional path we take, true success and fulfilment may always be an elusive dream and we may never break intergenerational cycles of oppression and poverty.