

IBM software project manager
jacqueline

mims

shattering the glass ceiling



God first, my family second, and this job third. So they took that to say, ‘Well, how in the world can she succeed here?’ We have to work 12 hours a day,” she says, remembering their skepticism. “But, I worked harder than all of them. I had to multitask, there were times when I had to go home for lunch and prepare dinner, or clean the house—so, I had to juggle both worlds. And I think that [being certified] was a major accomplishment for me.”

As a child, Mims recalls always being the “analytical” child, a characteristic that was key in leading her into her current profession, especially since she often fixed things around the house. “I was always the one who wanted to take something apart to see how it worked,” she fondly remembers. “We had a house full of girls, so when the curling iron broke, I was the one who took it apart to see if I could rewire it. If the vacuum cleaner broke, I fixed it.”

“My story is inspirational. I think a lot of people can relate to me versus someone who was on the silver track all of their lives. My mom was a secretary and my father was a janitor.”

Now, with her days of hairdryer fixing in the past, Mims concentrates on bigger things at IBM. Her position requires her to work closely with the development of the IBM ThinkPad, including the creation of higher brow laptops with wireless connection abilities. It’s her responsibility to coordinate the production of its applications such as Internet Explorer and Adobe Acrobat, ensuring that each function is properly tested. “Basically when you press that the button and the machine goes up and turns on, I’m responsible for what you experience,” she explains.

With a slew of accomplishments and awards, Mims still maintains the desire to press on. Eventually she wants to be the CEO of a company, something that with her track record of relentless drive is very feasible. “I think my story is inspirational in that I can touch many people because I think a lot of people can relate to me versus someone who was on the silver track all their lives,” she says offering an explanation why she’s a motivational force in so many people’s lives. “My mom was a secretary and my father was a janitor.”

Mims often participates in lectures encouraging people to live up to their full potential, despite their circumstances. She’s living proof of what perseverance can accomplish. She says she continues to be inspired by the impact that she is having on young Blacks, particularly her own children. “I’m excited because [my children] look at what I’ve done and what I’ve accomplished. They’ve seen ‘Mommy’ on national television, so this is the norm for them. That’s what keeps me driven, my babies and my Lord.”

— Jacinta Howard

Being a devoted wife, mother, and successful professional isn’t easy. But, anybody needing a little inspiration needs to look no farther than Jacqueline Mims.

She’s the first and only African American civil servant certified as a Spacecraft Command Controller Engineer and Spacecraft Analyst Engineer at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center—and she did it with two children, ages one and three. She was awarded at the 2001 Ted Turner Trumpet Award Ceremony as a “Rocket Scientist/Young Star” and she’s received numerous prestigious awards for her achievements as an engineer. Currently, she’s the Software Project Manager in IBM’s Mobile Product Services Group development of cutting edge software technology for the IBM ThinkPad. With all this said, it’s plainly obvious that Mims is on a mission, a true example of achievement for women everywhere.

Starting out as a secretary with NASA, Mims tenaciously climbed the career ladder, eventually reaching a coveted spot that many doubted she had the time or dedication to obtain. However, as she has demonstrated, the doubt of others can sometimes be a driving force in a person’s life. “My teammates knew that my priorities were