

Celebrate another dimension to Miami's narrative

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Miami is hot — and for different reasons this time. Everything is pointing to Miami being the center of the next tech and start-up boom. Our entrepreneurship ecosystem is in overdrive, and a lot of attention is being given to making resources readily available to create a nurturing community of entrepreneurs.

Overtown is facing its second renaissance with major redevelopment under way, and heritage communities such as Little Haiti and Coconut Grove are facing a renaissance of their own. Our skyline is marked by construction cranes, and our real-estate market is burning hot.

Most important, the business community is engaged in critical conversations about talent retention, job creation and our economy's diversification. Although most of the growth is limited to in and around Miami's downtown corridor — and other challenges, such as adequate public transportation, income inequality and the rising cost of living — still persist, Miami is on a roll, and it is becoming an even greater city, which is also the reason why the business community and the community at large should rally behind Black Tech Week.

Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Silicon Valley and the tech industry as a whole have been publicly shamed for their lack of diversity, which is only 2 percent African American, 4 percent Hispanic and about 15 percent female. As Miami matures, enhancing its narrative to being more than a hot vacation destination, it now has the opportunity to avoid making the same mistake. Black Tech Week is our chance to promote diversity in tech and innovation and to show that our growing entrepreneurial ecosystem is a reality for the entire community.

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Black Tech Week, being held at Miami Dade College's North Campus from Feb. 23-28, convenes innovators, investors and entrepreneurs from around the globe. The panelists and participants are committed to promoting black entrepreneurship and diversity in tech innovation and to ensuring that Miami is also positioned as a hub for doing business in the Caribbean and Africa, much like the city has become the gateway to Latin America. As a community, we rallied behind eMerge Americas and the opportunity to expose our brand to the rest of the nation and solidify our position as a growing tech and start-up community. My vision is that we will also rally behind Black Tech Week and show that we are committed to true diversity and inclusion.

I applaud the brains behind Black Tech Week — Felecia Hatcher and Derick Pearson of Code Fever, both whom have been ultra-committed to bringing tech education to minority communities without seeking recognition or awards. I applaud them for being bold enough to carry out such a grand vision and bringing some of this country's most celebrated black tech innovators to town. From African innovator, Chinedu Echeruo (founder of HopStop, which was sold to Apple for \$1 billion); Jon Gosier (founder of AppAfrica and named by CNN as one of 10 African Tech Voices and one of 25 most influential African Americans in technology by Business Insider); and Ingrid Riley of Startup Weekend Jamaica to this community's own Brian Brackeen of Kairos, Pandwe Gibson of EcoTech Visions and Stonly Baptiste of Urban.us, Hatcher and Pearson have put together a cadre of young



innovators with the potential to contribute to Miami's changing landscape.

This is how we promote talent retention — by supporting our own to reverse the brain drain and replace it with a brain gain, exposing Miami to top talent outside of this community.

Black Tech Week is part of this burgeoning Miami and provides optimal collision points to bring about change within the black community and add another dimension to Black History Month, this time fostering innovation and empowerment.

Fabiola Fleuranvil is CEO of marketing and branding firm, Blueprint Creative Group and is on the steering community for Black Tech Week.