

Five Questions with Antoine Wilson and Awonu Akinrinsola

February is Black History Month, a time to recognize and honor the achievements of Black Americans and their central role in our history. This month encourages reflection, while also allowing space to celebrate the present, including the fullness of African American culture and the individuals shaping our country today.

One way we are celebrating Black History Month is by spotlighting Black employees who make a difference at our company. Below we profile a conversation with two of these leaders: Antoine Wilson, Manager of Operations Accounting and Awonu Akinrinsola, Reservoir Engineer.

What was your career journey to Chesapeake?

AW: Working at Chesapeake was my first job out of college. I had a few opportunities, but I chose Chesapeake because I saw that it would be a growing company. I started in the mailroom, working my way up to the accounting department — my goal after earning my accounting degree from OU.

AA: I'm second-generation oil and gas, following in my dad's footsteps (also a petroleum engineer). Through his career, I saw where the industry could take you. My parents are immigrants from Nigeria and we lived both in the U.S. and overseas as my dad pursued different career opportunities.

As a first generation American, I studied engineering at LSU and joined Chesapeake early in my career. I have always worked in reservoir engineering, but Chesapeake has given me significant opportunities across many business units.

How do you describe your responsibilities at Chesapeake?

AA: As a reservoir engineer, my focus is understanding our assets. We study an asset's characteristics and develop plans for how to get the oil and gas out as economically as possible. It's a lot of analysis, planning and prudent decision-making — and hoping for the best when the wells come on.

AW: I'm a people leader first. My favorite part of my job is staff development and working with the field to better understand our accounting processes. You'll find me in the field doing accounting trainings, and I was heavily involved in the creation of the accounts payable role in each of our business units. It's important that my team isn't viewed as corporate accountants, but that we're partnering with the field to complete the company's accounting needs.

You both serve on the company's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Council. Why is this work important to you?

AW: I've been at Chesapeake for nearly 20 years, and during that time I've built a lot of relationships in the company. If I can help increase awareness around DEI, even if it's at an individual level, that is impactful to me. And as a minority, I want to share my experience and relate to others.

AA: I echo what Antoine said — when I think about DEI, I think about making people feel valued for their differences, whether those differences can be seen or not. When we celebrate differences, and make people feel comfortable working here, our business is more successful. I know when I feel seen, I am more open to sharing my ideas — this is a feeling I want for everyone across the company.

Antoine, you've been at Chesapeake for nearly 20 years. What motivates you?

AW: I'm a competitive guy that wants to see projects succeed. At Chesapeake, there's always a challenge to tackle and I'm invested in both the company and my team's success. It's always been a great place to work but ultimately, it's the people that keep me coming back. I love coming to work and I love the relationships I have here.

AA: I have liked to see your progression at Chesapeake, Antoine. You got your foot in the door, and you continued to succeed. I appreciate that people have had that experience at Chesapeake.

Awonu, you are passionate about mentoring and encouraging young people's interest in STEM. Did you have a mentor who helped to shape your career?

AA: I've had a series of mentors who really pulled me up with them. There are many times when one person made a difference in my career trajectory. If I can be that person for someone else, I want to show up. And while I encourage anyone's interest in STEM and engineering, I feel like I've had the most impact with women and women of color because I can speak to my personal experience in the industry.

(We couldn't stick to just 5 questions this month!) Oil and gas is not a traditionally diverse industry. What has been your experience as a Black employee?

AA: My initial experience with oil and gas was international (through my dad's career) and I saw a lot of diversity. As my career has focused on independent E&P's, I've had a less diverse experience. There have been times where I feel like I haven't belonged, but I'm encouraged by Chesapeake's commitment and the progress we've already made to be more inclusive.

AW: Similar to Awonu, early on in my career I felt lonely. I was trying to get my footing and I didn't think I had many similarities with people, which made me reserved about my personal life. Fast forward to today, I'm excited by the DEI and culture-related work we've done and I'm grateful for my many coworker relationships.

AA: When you're a minority in a dominant culture, you often feel the need to assimilate. You often try to mute what's different about you, but then you become like everyone else. You're not bringing your unique perspective to things. We want people to feel comfortable being who they are at Chesapeake.



Awonu Akinrinisola with her husband, daughter and son.



Antoine Wilson (far left) with his family, including his niece and nephew (middle) and his oldest daughter's fiancé (far right).