



Young Gifted and STEM Profile – Who Am I?

Kwasi Kwakwa – UK

1. Who are you and what is your STEM Superpower?

My name is Kwasi Kwakwa and I am a Physicist and Imaging Scientist. My superpower is that I sit in the middle of a lot of different fields, so I have to be able to speak the language of Physicists, Mathematicians, Programmers, Engineers and Biologists!

2. When did you first realise you were passionate about your STEM subject or field?

I have always enjoyed Maths and the Sciences, but I do not think I focused more on Physics, until the end of 6th form and the beginning of university.

3. Describe the route you took, which lead from finishing your GCSEs until now.

After my GCSEs I knew I wanted to do a STEM subject, so I ended up studying Physics, Chemistry and Maths at 6th form level. After secondary school in Ghana, I ended up going to University in the USA, initially to get an Electrical Engineering degree, but then I ended up getting stuck in the Physics building!

After my **Physics BA**, I worked for a few years in the USA, then a year and a half in Ghana, then moved to London to study for a Physics MRes at King's College London. I stayed in the same department for a Physics PhD: mostly building microscopes and running imaging experiments.

After the PhD, I had two Postdoctoral roles, one at Imperial College and one at UCL, both a mixture of microscope building, biological imaging and computer image analysis. Now I am a **staff scientist at the European Bioinformatics Institute**, doing pretty much the same thing!

4. If you had to study/focus on ONE STEM area for the rest of your career what would it be and why?

That would be a tough call. The great thing about this field is that it sits at the intersection of many different fields and so I get to constantly learn new things. That said, nowadays I am learning a lot about computational image analysis, and I would happily do that. It covers enough areas so I would never be bored.

5. What do you enjoy most about your day to day role?

The diversity of the work. I get to work on a wide range of problems across different disciplines and talk to scientists with many kinds of expertise. I am very lucky in that I am never bored and there is always more to learn.



Kwasi delivering a session at a Conference

6. Who would name as your main STEMspiration and why?

Before I knew any other black people in STEM, I had my **Father**, who is an Engineer. So, while I have found several other role models since, he was first.

7. Outside of STEM, what are your other hobbies?

I have a black belt in Judo, although I do not train as much as I would like to these days. I also try and read as much as I can, I cook (a bit!) and I am now picking up photography.

8. Lastly, if you could give our Young Gifted and STEM readers one piece of advice, what would it be?

Find a community of people who will believe in you and support you. Without them, the rest of this can be incredibly hard and lonely.

