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How did you get interested in Automotive Technology and what has your journey been like so far? What is your background?

I have always been a hands-on person, though until recently it has only been a hobby. I used to rebuild bikes at one point in time and I really enjoyed it—there is something unique about building them from the ground up and putting your own parts on them and detailing them and making that extra special something. When I was little, my grandfather was the Carpenter/Electrician/Mechanic in our family and I always wanted to help him, so I think some of that rubbed off on me. To this day, I get excited when I go to the hardware store. Later, when I wanted things for my home—that were expensive in the store—I learned to build them and just work with what I already had.

After high school, I had small jobs working at the Baseball Park and Old Navy for example, so that's where my customer service began. Later, I worked as a waitress and then at Instacart doing in-store shopping. I thought maybe customer service was my field and I began to accept that, but at the same time I wasn't really impressed by it.

While I was pregnant with my little boy—who is four now—I took a break from everything and really focused on being a mother to him. I was receiving financial assistance from CalWORKS and one day I was at the career development center—where the JobsNOW! program was. They had all their job flyers out. I was walking around the table and reading the flyers—mostly for clothing and grocery store jobs—when I saw a flyer for something different. It said, “*Women in Automotive*” and I remember that I saw it, stopped, kind of looked around, read it again and I was so excited.

Inside, I felt an excitement, and I knew, “I've got to do this.”

Jamice Jones

Mechanic / Automotive Pre-Apprentice

CAREER QUICK LOOK

Years in Field:
10 months

City/State:
San Francisco, CA

LinkedIn:
[Profile](#)

Video Clip:
[Watch on YouTube](#)

Ethnicity:
Puerto Rican, African American

School:
City College of San Francisco

Degree:
Completed Auto Pre-Apprenticeship,
Certificates in Brakes expected 12/2019,
Welding 5/2020

Career Pathway:
Automotive Mechanic / Autobody

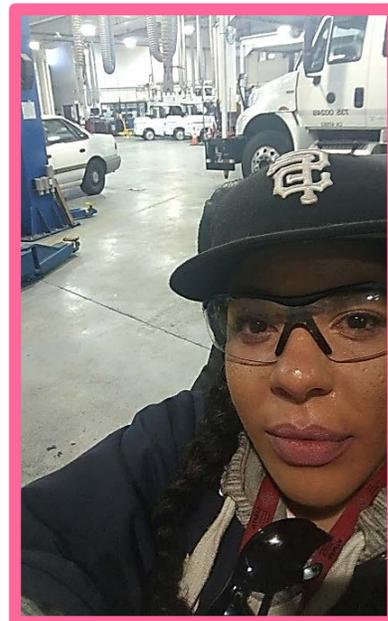
Personal Time:
Time with 4-year-old son, Creating art

What was the Pre-Apprenticeship application process like?

The program start date was two or three months away, so I had to wait. While I was waiting, I would show my friends the flyer and they would say, "Oh, that's you, that's definitely you." I got more and more excited.

I signed up as soon as the application process for the Pre-Apprenticeship opened and was scheduled to take the test. It was a big deal to just apply for the program because it took so much effort and your application was ranked. I remember when I walked into the testing site, I was the only female there. I walked into the room feeling happy and confident and realized, "Wow, it's all guys in here." My confidence level didn't drop, but it made me think, "Okay, just relax a little bit. You already stand out enough in the room, so just take it down." Later, I found out I ended up ranking higher than almost everyone there. That was a good feeling.

I did attend a "Women and Auto Meet and Greet" event before I applied, and that got me even more excited. When I actually started and there were only seven women in the program (out of 21) it was a little bit of a bummer, but I was so happy that I was there that was all that mattered. I was imagining it would be all women or half women. It was an eye-opener when I realized the lack of women in the trades. When I saw that, I was even more determined that this was something I wanted to pursue, to try to overcome obstacles and let it be known that we can do it, too.

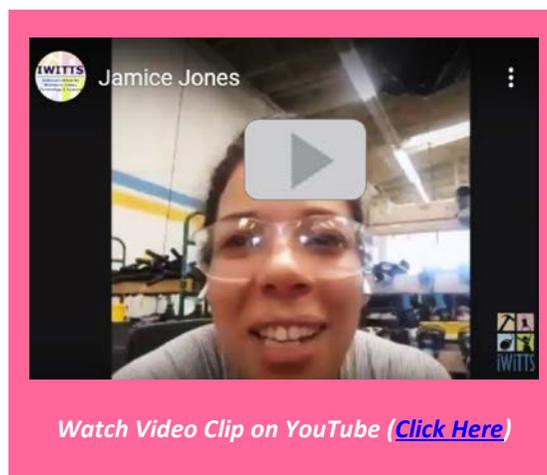


What do you love about your field?

I love being hands-on with automobiles, whether it's mechanical or painting and rebuilding.

What advice do you have for other women considering this career?

My advice is to really get to know the trade that you're getting into, do as much research as you can, and if you want something just go get it. Don't let anybody else tell you or discourage you from your dream and what it is you have pictured in your mind. You know what works for you. People tried to discourage me, but that was just more motivation to prove that this is what I want. Sometimes you've got to work a little harder, but don't be afraid to push forward and take control and show what you're made of because you have to. If you sit back, you're not going to get anywhere. So, just don't be afraid.



What is the pay like for an Auto Mechanic?

The program provided us with a "Women in Automotive Careers Fact Sheet" that said Automotive Mechanics and Technicians typically start at \$16 to \$32 an hour and master mechanics can make up to \$100K. A Union Apprenticeship in the Automotive field has a starting salary of \$41,000-\$51,000 with raises every 6 months until completion plus excellent benefits. Journey level workers earn \$75,000-\$92,000 plus excellent benefits (after a 4-year Apprenticeship).

Tell us what you did as an Automotive Pre-apprentice: What was a typical workday like? What was the work environment like? What do you wear on the job?

So, the actual Pre-Apprenticeship was one of the most awesome experiences of my life. I was paired with two other Pre-Apprentices—both guys—they sent us in groups of three. I was named the (unofficial) supervisor because I kept us organized—as a woman I’ve had a lot of experience keeping a household together.

On one of the job sites, we did a lot of brakes, so that helped me with the studies I’m doing now to get my certificate as a brake specialist. It was hands-on and I got the practice. We were working with double accordion buses that are much bigger than cars, but it’s still basically the same thing.

We were rotated among job sites and duties. We did heavy-duty diesel maintenance; preventative maintenance; autobody and painting. The body shop made me realize how much I missed working on my bikes since it had been a while. When we got to paint some panels, that gave me another idea of a different direction I could go.

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What makes you successful in your work? What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

I set a goal and have watched it unfold. I just got through with midterms and I did pretty well. I’m proud of the fact that I can juggle work, school and family. The fact that I am still standing is pretty amazing. I work 30 hours a week as a Scooter Technician, I go to school 20 hours per week, I study and I take care of my 4-year-old son.

What would it mean to you to be the first female mechanic at San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)? What did doing the Automotive Pre-Apprenticeship mean to you?

When I started the job training, I showed up to work in my uniform and didn't take it off until I got home. While others got dressed at work and undressed when they left, I was the only one who would still have my uniform on. I have never felt so proud of myself. People don't understand what this has meant for me. It was a huge deal.



I was asked in an interview what I thought about the possibility of becoming one of the first women to work as a Mechanic with SFMTA. I had to hold back tears. What! Then, they asked me what it would mean to me to have a job at SFMTA as a Mechanic. I choked up a little. I thought out loud “It would mean stepping outside of the box. Breaking down barriers, showing that yes, we can. It would be proving to anyone that doubted women could ever fit in such a role is wrong. It would mean no more welfare. It would mean securing my children's future.” So, you can imagine how I felt when I got home and my four-year-old said, “Mommy, when I grow up can I go to fixing car school, too?”

This opportunity has opened up so many options for me and the directions I can go. I didn't even know the City College of San Francisco Evans campus existed and taught all these trades in a way that really fits how I like to learn and helps me grasp concepts.

Today, I've never been so excited about my future. I've got a much clearer perspective on my life. Now, all I need is the opportunity to show and prove my dedication and what I have to bring to the table. Yes, I am a woman. Yes, I want in on a chance to provide comfortably for my son and I without worrying if someone can help me. Yes, I know it's hard work. I also know if I can do it, then it's possible for another woman to do it, too. If you want it enough and you start little by little taking those steps towards what you want, you will see your life change and the smallest things can end up being the most monumental. Every little thing is molding my future and I have a feeling it's going to be good!

What challenges have you overcome? Are your friends and family supportive?

I have to work around the hours that I have available because of my son's childcare. I just got him into a new daycare that opens a little earlier—7:30 am—so that will make things a lot easier. Some shops want you to start as early as 7 am, while others start later. During the orientation, we had to be there at 7 am. I didn't want to miss out on that opportunity, so I ended up sending my son to his grandmother's out in Pittsburgh and I didn't see him that whole week. It was rough on both of us. Once it moved to 8 am, I was able to have a little bit more leeway.

Do you ever have any female company? What is it like working with mostly male co-workers? Have you encountered any problems because you are a woman, such as being given different job duties?

I was the only woman on the Pre-Apprenticeship job sites. Some people were 100% awesome and embraced all of us being there. It was cool. For example, one person in charge of the Pre-Apprentices took us under his wing, showed us everything and he challenged us—it was great.

In some instances, I could tell I made some people uncomfortable. As a female, I got asked, "Are you sure you want to do this?" I replied, "I am here, thank you." A couple times, I was mistaken for a high school student and I thought, "Okay, I'll be flattered, I guess." A couple of times, I was given the easiest job possible. One day, I got left standing alone for a half an hour and that was disappointing.



You are working as a Scooter Technician while you are going to school, can you describe that position? Why aren't you working as an Automotive Mechanic?

I wanted to stay in the Automotive field, but employers want you to have at least a year of experience and I didn't quite have that yet. So, I went back to City College and continued my schooling in Automotive Technology. In the meantime, I needed a job and have been working as a Scooter Technician making \$20 an hour with full benefits for the last 2 months. I do a lot of preventative maintenance, rebuilds, repairs and some parts swapping.

These are scooters the public can rent in San Francisco. I'm the only woman Technician out of 10 to 15 Techs. I am kind of used to being the only woman because I have four older brothers, so I don't really notice it. Everyone is pretty cool about everything as long as you can do the job. Unfortunately, the scooter company didn't get a permit they needed, so they are going to shut down for a little bit in a couple of months. That means I am going to have to find another job. I hope I'll now have enough experience to get hired in the Automotive industry.

Did you prepare for the job interview process any differently as a woman? What did you wear? Any tips for other women?

Before I got this job, I went on a couple of interviews. I thought, "What can I wear to fit the role, but not be too feminine?" I remember the first interview I was thinking, "Should I just wear my jumper?" and then some of my

friends said, “Well, I don't think chefs wear their chef jacket for interviews.” After that, I decided to wear a button-down shirt tucked in with slacks—simple.

Do you have a mentor or role model?

I do have a role model that inspired me to pursue this field—my stepfather. He was a Muni driver and he passed away right around the time I began the Pre-Apprenticeship application process. After his passing, they had a celebration of life, and his sister told everyone how he never took his uniform off because he was so proud of his job. He wanted to show the people in the community he lived—near the North Beach Projects—that there are options out there and there are other ways you can go about living life comfortably. He owned a minivan and would take all of the neighborhood kids to Great America Theme Park and make sure they got haircuts. He worked for Parks and Recreation and opened up the first gym for older kids. He was a pillar of the community. He lived life the way we all hope to.

I remember he used to ask me, "What are you doing?" At the time, I didn't understand what he was really asking me. After hearing people speak at his gathering, I realized what he had left behind. That spark that I felt when I saw the flyer for the program ignited into a fire. I needed to do this for him and for myself and for my family. I want my kids to not know the struggle that I know. I want to be proud of myself and I want my kids to be proud of me.

Do you have any Certifications?

I expect to receive my Brake certification by the end of the year. I am currently an intermediate Welder and after an additional semester I should receive my Welding certificate.

What are your future goals for your career?

Right now, I am working towards getting certificates as a Brake Specialist and as a Welder, so I have the option of going into Auto Body. I want to work in the Automotive field. Perhaps one day, I will be the first female Automotive Apprentice for the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA).

How do you like to spend your time off?

I enjoy painting and drawing and doing things around the house. Besides that, spending time with my 4-year-old son and my family.



Welding Project

Jamice participated in an Automotive Pre-Apprenticeship Program that was 18 weeks long and started in January 2019. This Automotive Pre-Apprenticeship Program is a partnership between City College of San Francisco and the City and County of San Francisco and public/private apprentice training with union automotive companies, the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, and Advanced Manufacturing & Transportation Apprenticeships of California. Community-based organization partnerships: Bayview Hunter's Point YMCA, Tradeswomen Inc. and Jewish Vocational Services. The National Institute for Women in Trades, Technology & Science provided technical assistance on recruitment of women and under-represented minorities and developed this role model profile with support by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1102996.

