

## I Am Happy to Announce...



**By: Rodney Nayo**

"Alright, so tell us about yourself. Who is Oretha? What makes you unique and awesome, y'know, and what makes you so wonderful?"

"Okay, so uhm...my name is Oretha Freeman. I am a 21-year-old enthusiastic Liberian living in Caldwell, Dixville. I'm majoring in Information Technology at BlueCrest University College. Uhm...I like to draw. Both traditionally and digitally. I like to animate and create videos when I am feeling bored or when I pretty much don't have anything to do. And then, I would just share the videos on my Instagram story or my WhatsApp status. I think what makes me unique is that I create funny content, and in the end, people would come and share with me that because of my content, they would even like to purchase the product to try it out and see."

"Oh wow, that's magnificent! I would love to see that video sometime..."

Oretha chuckled, nodding to her statement. "Yeah... I recently won an award. I was shortlisted as a winner of the Pixie-Dust teen African-American animation contest."

"Oh really? Congrats! That's very impressive of you."

She chuckled again. "Thank you."

"Can I take a look at your portfolio? If you could send the link to me again, that would be great."

"Right, sure." She quickly opened a new tab. She stopped a bit. She closed her eyes and squinted, trying to figure out what website she saved them on again. She hurriedly copied the hyperlink and pasted it in the chat box of the Google meeting as she finally remembered.

"Please, I have sent it."

"Right, just seen it. Thank you."

Then another voice popped up and asked, "Okay, so Oretha, in a word, could you tell us what attributes you possess that make you fit for this internship? Or, in other words, why are you the best fit for this opportunity?"

"Okay, uhm....in one word, I would say...I am tolerant."

"Do you care to shed more light on it?"

"Yes, please uhm...normally I don't like to ignore people's comments about my works. I am open and ready to like...take in people's comments as feedback. And then I would go ahead and improve on my next work and try to get better and stuff like that. So, I don't judge at all. Because I believe everyone is learning and we can never stop learning, so...yeah. I hear people from different backgrounds tell me how beautiful my designs are, which helps me make more designs like that. So, I would say that my tolerant behavior would help...uhm.... create a diverse learning environment. Where everyone is having fun and creating something unique....so yeah, that's pretty much it."

"Wow, I've seen them. I do like your animation. It is lovely." A different voice blurted out.

"Thank you."

Then the first voice cut in, "So here is the final question, just to wrap things up because we don't have that much time. How long have you worked as a social media content creator? Do you have any experience, and how was it working as one?"

"Okay, so basically, I haven't actually had any experience working as a content creator in any firm. This might be my first time working as one if I get the job, but I have been to some places where I have done animated works for them, but I wouldn't say I worked for them. They just happen to make me animate a short scene for a gig or something of that sort.... yeah."

"Mm. Oh, okay, I see. Alright, so thank you so much, Oretha, for having this interview with us. We deeply apologize for the late timing. We had to let our supervisors know we had to attend another meeting with you. We also apologize that we are not allowed to share our identities with you because of the rampant cybercrimes in our vicinity. And so, our voices have to be concealed for security reasons. Sorry if it kept you nervous throughout the call. We would end this call by saying that SeShay, is a diverse, rapidly-developing full-administration real estate franchise. We are committed to giving our representatives astounding society, coaching, high-level efficiency instruments, unrivaled preparation, and leads by 2300. We subside in Atlanta, Georgia, but our branches are located in different parts of the globe. Running from Sweden, Serbia, Poland, Norway, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, and many more. We believe that in making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable, we need to tackle the problem of urban planning. It has been a hard time out there, especially with the BAETA war occurring for the past 5 years. Y'know...because of how intoxicating the BAETA chemical has affected the world's atmosphere and plantation, there is a huge dispute between Bangladesh and the US, so it really affected us all. I'm sure you have heard about the platform they plan to build on top of the earth. So, because of that, everyone is slowly relocating to that platform, making our way of living devastating. The privileged are the ones living on it

right now, and the impoverished are left to live below. And we have no choice but to adapt to the world's way as business and job creation are spiking up on the platform. People need guides on where to invest. Hence they need real estate management companies, and we are here to provide them with top-notch."

"Oh, okay..."

"We understand that the unemployment rate has spiked up. And so, we have opened the floor for outstanding creatives, like yourself and especially from Africa and the African Diaspora, who come from impecunious backgrounds and are willing to be diligent, hardworking, and to just spend some time with us and learn so that they would be equipped for the working-field."

"Yes, please."

"Do you have any questions before we end the call?"

"Uhm...no, please."

"Alright then, thank you again for being with us. Have a good evening."

"Thank you too. Goodbye." She smiled, waving at the screen.

29<sup>th</sup> June 2259. It was 7:15 pm. Ten more weeks to end the summer break. Oretha immediately logged out of the call, jumped on her unmade wooden-framed single bed, grabbed her phone, and went on social media to text her friends about the opportunity. She kept a smile on her face while scrolling through the LinkedIn feeds. She switched off her phone and took a deep breath, feeling that the interview went well and would soon post the good news on her LinkedIn page. She hopped out of bed, switched on the water heater, and got in for a shower. Mum called her to come and prepare something for the house. She left her room and went to the kitchen to answer her call. Mum asked how her day was after returning home from work, simply checking up on her. And Oretha told her about the internship she applied for, which made her mum so proud of her. Tonight, they were preparing something that Oretha loved so much. Chicken Peanut Soup. It was simply irresistible. She remembered that she packaged that meal to school once, and most of the students smelt its sweet-scented aroma and couldn't resist asking her for a taste of it.

She added some kind of *esaïse*\*. They prepared the soup and placed it in a bowl. Oretha placed the bowl in the center of the dining table so it would be added with assorted rice and chicken stir-fry. The two engulfed everything on the table while having weird and interesting discussions about life.

Oretha was her mum's only pride and joy. Oretha's dream was to become an air hostess. Something that she told her dad about but didn't tell Mum because she was afraid of how she would take it. She assumed that her mum wanted her to be an Accountant or a Doctor, which she had little interest in. Her dad wasn't with them. He decided to stay in Ohio because he worked as a Senior Blockchain Engineer. And funny enough, dad's apartment was close to the main airport, so he sure would be early anytime he needed to book a flight somewhere. And he would also call her, telling her a lot about his airport adventures. Her dad had other wives, and it annoyed mum that he spent a lot of time with them because they were in upper-class positions. So, she didn't want to see him. Dad genuinely loved them as he still gets to message his daughter and check up on her daily. With Dad earning a decent amount of money in bitcoin,

he can send money to Mum so she can pay for her school fees and provide for the needs of the house.

After supper, Oretha washed the plates and took care of any other house chores that she did not cross out on her to-do list. Everything was done. She wished her mum goodnight, and mum responded back as well. She got to her room and lay in bed. She immediately went to message a new friend she had made two days ago. His name was Ivan. She liked how smart, caring and funny he was. She liked the conversations she had with him and even liked hearing his voice. It was about 11:15 pm, and she noticed he was online on Snapchat, so she messaged him there. They messaged each other for as long as they could remember, discussing sensitive topics society wouldn't want to discuss openly. They kept talking, which was such a soothing thing for her. She was amazed at how she had met someone who could really understand her figurative thoughts and ideas. But the conversation didn't keep long. She dozed off, leaving the last message Ivan sent on read...

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Time passed, and she had not heard from the company she was applying for, for three weeks. With so much overthinking, she wrote an email, sending a follow-up to the firm. A few hours passed, and there was no response. Then it went on for about 5 days more. She didn't hear from them. She turned on the TV in the living room to watch her favorite station, trying to forget her thoughts. She thought the team might have already chosen their applicants and forgotten about her.

Sunday. The sixth week had arrived. She woke up with a little ache in her head, feeling she woke up too late. She checked the time on her phone, and it was 8:03 am. She saw numerous notifications on her phone. Then she realized an email had been sent to her, of high importance. The Subject of the mail read SeShay Interview Confirmation. Finally, the moment she had been waiting for. She immediately ignored all other notifications and focused solely on that one. She opened it so hurriedly with her adrenaline levels rushing through her nerves.

She saw it... the introduction read, "Thank you, Oretha, for your..." She pressed the power button on her phone, put it to sleep, and placed the phone down. She took a deep breath. She knew how the format went. It is the moment she dreaded. It was something she kept on seeing almost every time. Placing the phone in her pocket, she strolled out of the room. She wore her slippers and told mum she was taking a quick walk. She opened the front gate and took off.

She was observing the state of her surroundings. And as she guessed it, the same as always. The clouds were black-purplish because of the platform's development, the new world everyone would live in. She was walking along the sidewalk of a runway. She looked around at everything. The dilapidated buildings, the polluted soils, half-contaminated rivers, the pile of rubbish civilians keep on leaving on the streets and into the gutters, the stray dogs playing

with each other, and the street-smart hawkers trying to rob people in broad daylight. She smelt the scent of burnt polythene bags and rubbish and, of course, the stinking gutters. She passed by mob violence that occurred when a thief almost tried to steal a lady's purse and phone. They almost killed the thief, but thankfully some good people separated the massacre from happening.

This was the 27th rejection letter she had received. She applied for various applications, and they all turned her down. She couldn't figure out what really made the company not accept her. She really needed answers to it. She stopped near a church building and mustered the courage to finally read the email to the end. She had a slight hope that maybe she doubted herself all along. But it wasn't the case. The firm was looking for experienced people at that moment. She did not qualify because she had no experience, and they were very sorry about it. She was already facing so many hard times and struggles in Liberia already. Wherever she buys something, she has to tell the seller to reduce the prices because of inflation. She would have to pay the officials almost every day for a crime that she didn't know became a crime. She kept scratching her hair as she scrolled through people's LinkedIn posts. She kept on seeing numerous people, getting good jobs, and people sending them love messages and good wishes. The more she kept on scrolling, the more she slowly lost it.

Oretha didn't tell either mum or dad, but she texted Ivan about it. And immediately, Ivan sent her a website link for a company hiring volunteers. She hesitated a bit but ultimately decided to send her CV and cover letter, trying again. She visited the company's website, looking through what they had to offer. And for that split second, with the pain and frustration, she carried deep inside her, came an idea that changed her mindset completely.

She came back home with the idea still fresh in her mind. She grabbed her notebook and made a timetable for the activities she would be doing for the following six weeks. She searched the web for how to create an effective cafeteria business that would win customers over. And she found the right one she was looking for. She read articles, watched YouTube videos, and registered for online certificate programs. Then she practiced all the concepts that were taught. She designed a business model canvas, a blueprint of how she would run the business, a minimum viable product chart, and the ideation map process that would come about.

Satisfied with what she had done, she quickly rushed to mum to tell her the idea. She presented her findings and her quality of research and ideas to her, concluding that she wanted to open a restaurant that people would love to get into. Her mum, impressed with what she had done, supported this idea and was willing to start setting up the business plan. She contacted Ivan to help make a webpage for advertisement and ordering placement. Then she made an animated short video to broadcast on various social media platforms. For some time, she didn't get anyone to come in. Until, slowly, her friends from university got to know about it and recommended many people to try it out. Then for a few weeks, she identified her impulse buyers, her new and active ones. She quickly adjusted her model to install new ideas to improve customer engagement. Her friend, Laila, was close to a public figure on LinkedIn named Don B. Laila contacted the man for him to try out her friend's restaurant. And so, the man went over to Oretha's neat and tidy restaurant shed and posted on his feed for people to come and enjoy with him. And that's when she started getting a lot of people coming in. It was unbelievable the number of customers she was getting. She was making 350 Liberian dollars per week, which was impressive. The good news from Ivan came out to her that the volunteering internship she

applied for was successful, and she was willing to adjust her schedule to work with them. The company also lived near an airport that Oretha always dreamt of visiting. As she was interning at the side, she got to meet up with the pilot and the air hostess, engaging and networking with them on any opportunity she could go for to become one. She told mum and dad about her experience, and they all laughed at how interesting it was. With her hard work earning her blessings and rewards, she took out her phone, opened up LinkedIn, and clicked on her post button. She then attached photos of her work experience. She started typing, "I am happy to...."

Then she stopped. She smirked and canceled what she was doing. She thought she would be no different from the others, and someone out there could be feeling overwhelmed and depressed the same way she felt earlier.

It was almost time for school to reopen, and she was happy that she had accomplished not all but a handful of things during her break.

Upon her experience, she didn't worry about the future anymore. She was concerned about her "then" and her "now." Because she felt that that was what life was all about.

\*Sauce in Bassa