

Chioma Umeala, up-and-coming actress, filmmaker and producer



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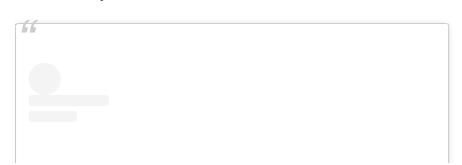
This week I catch up with Chioma Umeala, known as Ayo on BET Africa's *Isono*, an up and coming actress and aspiring filmmaker and producer who through her talents and work ethic, is working her way up to becoming a household name in the international film industry.

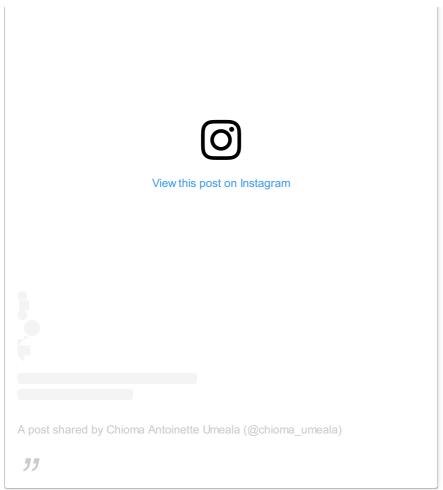


You're an up-and-coming actress and aspiring filmmaker and producer. How did you get into the film industry?

I did drama in high school. After high school it became a struggle because I had to convince my parents to let me study acting. Two years after leaving high school, I finally went to Africa Film Drama Art (AFDA) for a year then later I found an agent but it didn't work out. I still wasn't in the industry at all and I wasn't even studying at that point.

I then went to Indigo View, an acting academy for advanced actors. That course was one of the best things that I could have done for me personally and for my acting. After I completed my course, I found an agent and only then did I get into the film industry.





Aside from acting, you're a humanitarian at heart. What projects are you working on?

Although I do not have any projects at the moment, I am looking to collaborate with organisations working on projects focusing on the LGBTQIA+ community, racial injustices, gender-based violence and gender discrimination. These are issues that I am most passionate about. We still have a long way to go in terms of fixing things and creating an equitable society for those oppressed and affected by these issues, and I want to play my part in doing that.

III A little birdy tells me that's not all you are. What other talents do you have?

I play the piano, guitar, and percussion instruments. I started playing piano when I was 10 years old. I tried to play it at least once a week but because of my hectic schedule recently, I last played it over a month ago. I started playing the guitar when I was 12 and I try to play it at least once every day. I also do martial arts and gymnastics. Although I'm still nurturing and developing these two arts, I'm hoping to become a professional in the near future.

III Growing up, what did you want to be?

I always wanted to be an entertainer in some way, shape, or form. When I was 10 years old I wanted to be a musician and performer. Then, when I got to high school and I was a little older, I found myself drawn to acting a little bit more as a career choice

Could you share with us what's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?

Literally, behind my mask is my defined cheekbones and lip gloss. Figuratively, I'd say I'm a goofy girl who is a deep thinker, contemplates a lot and very empathetic.

III What's the one thing not everyone knows about you that they should?

I am a scaredy-cat. I get scared very easily which makes me gullible to pranks. I don't even watch horror movies because even kiddie movies can scare me.

What are the most notable highlights of your career?

My most notable highlight so far in my acting and film career is my role as Ayo on Isono on BET Africa. My career in this industry is just starting, and I am looking forward to landing bigger acting roles not just local but also international films.

Where are you based during lockdown?

I am based in Johannesburg, staying safe indoors with my mom, dad (before he passed away) and siblings.

When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?

When I'm not working, I'm hanging out with friends and family and I play basketball during the weekend with some of my friends. I don't go out a lot but when I do, it's going out to a restaurant for a meal with my friends to catch up on what's been happening in our lives, whilst still observing all Covid-19 protocols of course.

What's your theme song for 2021?

I think we're still in the beginning of 2021 to choose a theme song for the whole year. But the current soundtrack of my life right now is Dua Lipa's Future Nostalgia album. I listen to it every day.

2021 has just begun. What's next for you?

I'm always working on improving my acting skills and growing as an actor, so this year I'm continuing with that and ensuring that I become the best in what I do. I'm also looking forward to possibly working on other projects and films.

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