

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



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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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.

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▀ ***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.

▀ ***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.

▀ ***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.

▀ ***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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