

The Journey of the Entrepreneur

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THE JOURNEY OF THE ENTREPRENEUR

by

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B.S. University of Central Florida, 2019

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Radio and Television Production
in the Department of Film and Mass Media
in the College of Science
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The intent of this thesis was to describe the process of being an entrepreneur who is a minority. The interviews and observations that were captured on camera can now be transformed into a documentary. This project was started to shed light on the struggle of being an entrepreneur and to get a first-hand account of the high and lows of a business. It was found that everyone had similar reasons for starting the business although they had different products that were produced. In the end, this documentary will help others understand what it means to be a business owner, why entrepreneurship is important, and what impact this can have on a community.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all the woman who make a difference in the world. To my mom for loving and supporting me throughout my life, my grandmothers for always listening, and to anyone who has supported me on my journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Precious Ojemah and Ymani for being a part of this process. Your time energy and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

Being able to run a business is already an incredibly hard task. To do so while attending a university, working multiple jobs, and being young is pretty uncommon. Having the ability to do all of this is a great balancing act because it takes confidence, strength, and determination to create a prosperous black-owned business. My documentary showcases what it takes to be a minority entrepreneur and the challenges they face because of the color of their skin. Taking a look into the lives of several women who have a minority owned businesses we explore topics such as financial hardships as well as creating a safe space for what it means to be a young minority, trying to be successful, and run a business.

Three women in particular come to mind when I think of minority- owned businesses. The first is Precious Williams, a student at the University of Central Florida, owns a limited liability company called The Flourish Cookie Co. She creates and promotes healthy food and lifestyle choices for all people. The second, Ymani Latty, a student at the University of Central Florida, is the founder of The Wavy Shea Baby. Her business focusses on a hair and skin product line that promotes all-natural ingredients. Last but not least is, Ojemah Reiford, a wife and mother of four children, who is also the owner of the 7th Day Spa and Salon. A place where anyone can come and get styled by a beautician, a full face of makeup, or even a facial. All of these women have the business plan to be successful but it all comes down to whether they can actually turn that plan into reality.

These ladies have created a sense of community especially when it comes to the internet. Their interaction on social media not only showcases their talent but their products as well. As stated by Kate Rogers, from CNBC, “[a] factor that allows minority-owned businesses to flourish is a local community that supports these businesses regardless of whether they're retail storefronts.” They embrace the need for creating a loyal clientele that rely on their products or services. With the help of interviews, I will incorporate not only the positives but the negatives of running a black-owned business as well. According to Matthew Sonfield in the Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, “a ‘black-owned’ business in the United States is generally (but not always) defined as one for which the ownership is at least 50% ‘black’” and ownership is measured by sole proprietorship, partnership, or by the distribution of corporate ownership shares.” Additionally, I plan to compare new up-and-coming businesses versus seasoned black-owned businesses around the Orlando area. Another great topic to touch on is online business versus actual brick and mortar businesses. Being able to see both sides will give a more developed story and may cause the entrepreneurs to learn something that could help their business thrive.

Although social media is a great aspect for growing a business the success of that business comes down to having the funds to keep it open. Precious, Ymani, and Ojemah all have the commonality of struggling with the financial aspect of running a minority owned business. Precious has decided to close the Flourish Cookie Co. because of the rising cost of permits, expanding her food kitchen, and having the need to hire a staff with all the extra orders coming in. Ymani’s business is still up and running but the cost of business is expensive as well. She uses her own credit cards, personal

funds, and sometimes even financial help from her parents. Ojemah has unfortunately closed down her business due to financial costs. Ojemah's largest profit comes from clients who have relaxed hair, a chemical process. With the trend moving towards natural hair care, Ojemah has lost out on making money and had to get another job to make ends meet. She also felt like the whole point of owning her own business was to be able to set her own hours and spend time with her children. It seemed like to her closing down the business would be what's best for everyone. There stories are important to tell and should be heard everyone willing to listen.

TREATMENT

Logline: Money, school, kids, and working others jobs, sounds like a lot for someone right? Well on top of that add a being a minority and owning a business. This is the story of three amazing women and how they run their businesses.

Precious just mixed up some dates in her calendar for school and orders for her business. She was baking cookies when she should have studied for an exam. She still has flour on her fingers and a bit on her face. She throws her apron to the ground and quickly grabs her book bag and some notes off the table." I just did that how... how was that even possible I literally write everything out, so I know how my day, even my week is going to be planned out." Precious runs to her car, throws her bag in, and speeds down the street to get to campus. You can clearly see the panic and worry painted across her face.

Running a business is incredibly hard, but to do so while attending university, working a job separate from your business, and only being 21 is pretty uncommon. Doing all of this requires a great balancing act, and if you take on too much you just might fall short. Precious is in her most creative state in her home. She is always missing out on sleep and on most days, she is awake well over 18 hours. "It's like it's just not enough hours in the day for me to get done with everything I need to. Seems almost impossible, I feel like I need help but at the same time I can't really afford to pay anyone. It just feels like I'm stuck in this cycle of not going anywhere." Precious grabs

her hair out of frustration and plants her face in a pillow. She tenses up and you know she wants to scream but she still maintains her composure.

Precious also has a YouTube series that is her escape from all of the frustration and doubt she has in her mind. She channels all her negative energy into positive energy to show others how to be the best person they can be. She is in her room planning out some topics to talk about. “Gratitude. What does it mean to show gratitude? Do you think you show your gratitude to friends and family? A great way to do it is to put all of your feelings in a letter and give it to them.” She explains in more detail out loud, so she can hear if what she is saying makes sense. She jots down some notes and scribbles on paper. You see her eyebrows arch as she has an idea. You hear her whisper “A guest”. You see her write: have a different guest every week. She wants to showcase something that others can benefit from and relate too. She’s found another creative outlet to build her name and her brand.

Just as we get to know Precious we will also get to know another young entrepreneur, Ymani Latty. She is the creator of an all-natural skin and hair product line. To fully understand the highs and lows of running a business from a well-seasoned entrepreneur in the Orlando area, Ojemah Reiford will also be interviewed to gain a new perspective.

PLAN OF ACTION

During the Spring 2019 semester I did principle photography with my three subjects. I set up interviews with all three of them as well as sperate days to obtain b-roll. The film will be a hybrid documentary. According to Hewitt and Vasquez this means the documentary will feature components from biography that explore the lives of individuals that have similar goals. I will do this while utilizing story telling techniques such as character driven documentary and narrated documentary. Character driven documentary uses the voice and actions of certain characters to help drive the story. Narrated documentary brings into play, a voice of authority that can make connections that are not easily understood.

I began filming January 7th, 2019 up until March 29th, 2019. After each interview I transcribed all of the dialogue to have a better understanding of how to put the story together. Then I began to put together a rough edit and look for feedback from my committee. I then made those changes and added things such as music and titles to sweeten my project. Finally, I almost have a finished product and hope to screen at a collection of film festivals.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

My first goal of this project is to share the story of entrepreneurs who are striving to be successful. In telling their story we reveal many anecdotes and that can give us some insight on what it takes to run a business. In addition to my first goal, my second goal is to compare and contrast the highs and lows of running a business. Whether it be a long-standing business or a new Limited Liability Company there is always room for improvement. I am hoping to see a generational gap that shows differences in values and opinions, but also some level of consensus. I also hope to interview customers and clients to gain their perspective on why they shop at the business. Ultimately, anything can happen, but I will be ready with camera in hand.

Once my documentary is completed I plan to screen at several film festivals in Florida. The Florida Film Festival, the Palm Beaches Student Showcase of Films, and the Orlando Film Festival. I will need to raise funds for submission fees to enter these festivals. For funding I plan to use social media to gain traction for my documentary. Using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter I can ask others to make contributions. I will also create a trailer while I am in the process of filming to showcase to others the importance of donating to my cause. I also plan to search for grants through the school and other places that would be interested in funding my project. I even plan to ask friends and family for donations because every contribution, no matter the amount, is important.

RESOURCES NEEDED

For shoots, I needed 1-2 people working camera and audio for the project, but I ended up being a one woman show. Having other eyes and ears on set is always a great way to identify and fix small mistakes, that did have a huge impact on the final product. Some shots were overexposed, some out of focus, and audio at times were a bit low. These are all things I was able to fix in post-production. When it comes to equipment I used the Panasonic HD camcorder, Manfrotto tripod, wireless mics, and a Studio Pro Led light kit. I wanted to have minimal equipment but the maximum quality. In order to create my completed piece, I was editing in Adobe Premiere, After Effects, and Audition. I was able to add the appropriate titles, properly edit, and sweeten the audio.

CONCLUSION

My documentary will educate people on the financial hardships, fears, and acts of courage that it takes to run a business. Learning about these insights will help the audience gain a new perspective on the minority entrepreneur. Ultimately, my film will educate the audience on the struggles of owning a business being young or old, being a woman, and being a minority. The audience will also understand why customers continue to support these entrepreneurs on their journey. Vanessa Wade a well-known CEO in the African American community stated, "I want to support black businesses that provide services that I use in my day-to-day life." Many minorities feel as though their voices do not count in this world. Representation matters and people want to see a reflection of themselves when it comes to what they look like, the products they use, and the food they eat. Essentially, it brings a sense of pride and joy. The entrepreneurs will learn that they are a part of a community that is much bigger than themselves. People are looking up to them and those people may even try to start their own business to emulate their peers.

Throughout this entire I have been through a lot of trials and tribulations, when it came to this documentary. I gained a better understanding of time management and scheduling because of this project. I think I underestimated how much time goes into shooting and editing a film. Just getting my talent to remember the dates and times we spoke and texted about was a huge hurdle. Going to school full time and having a job also did not help. I feel like I had even less time that I thought I would and that made the times when I did work on the project, that much more precious.

When it comes to what documentaries to do with people, I think you gain a new perspective or think a different way that you didn't think before. A documentary opens your mind to different possibilities of new ideas, a different way of life, or even people going through their day to day lives. My mind has not changed one bit with regards to what documentaries do for people. Each person in the world has a story to tell and everyone is different but catching it on film is the real challenge.

While making this documentary I found it hard for my subjects to relax when being asked questions on camera. I think the idea of having a camera in their face was a huge amount of pressure. I just told them to act like we were having a conversation and we were just catching up on life. They seemed a bit calmer, but some still spoke incredibly fast, which was not their usual talking speed. It's one thing to have a conversation with someone but I feel like the pressure of having the camera in my subjects' face made them more uncomfortable. I found them to be stumbling more or even just overanalyzing what they were saying. I was worried about how them being uncomfortable would reflect on camera, so I did try to console them and let them know that they do not have to be perfect. Honestly the imperfections that people have are what makes a great story.

I have learned that documentaries are shot in the moment, so it's okay for the camera to be shaky. I think I always expect perfection in filming meaning every shot has to be still and, on a tripod, but there are times that does not work. For instance, I was in the kitchen for an extended period of time and some of the shots looked better with the camera on the counter, so I had to get out of my comfort zone. As far as my production skills I think they are pretty good but could use some work. I played around with depth

of field and some hand-held shots and it really paid off. My editing skills were great, but I could use some more practice in audio editing. As mentioned previously, one of my subjects spoke quite fast, so I created pauses by breaking up the different topics she spoke about. Some of the cuts were abrupt and I had to add an exponential fade in Premiere Pro to make it seem more natural. I watched some YouTube tutorials on how to adjust it. It was definitely better with the audio transition. I was very happy with the final outcome.

Reflecting back on my journey I feel that I have truly grown as a filmmaker. My main focus in the past has been scripted story. In doing documentary work I learned I will always have a plan B. Whether that means having backup days to shoot or even having back up people to help me film. Having another route of doing things is always great because you never know what can happen. As far as my film is concerned I plan to enter it in some contests, post it on my website, and post it on social platforms. It's important for me to gain some exposure as I graduate from the university with my degree. Having people view my work is a way for them to see my skill set and hopefully gain a job in my field. I ultimately want to create work that will leave a lasting impact on the people who view it. I feel that this project was a step in the right direction.

Overall, this experience was one of a kind and it definitely will help prepare me for a career in my field. I hope to collaborate with students on future projects, so we can create great content that will leave a mark on the world.

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