

Interview with Arkeif Robinson

for HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Emily Satterwhite, Spring 2010

Occupation: Student Assistant Manager, Owens Food Court, Virginia Tech

Time and Place: March 21, 2010, 5:15 pm – 5:30 pm, Squires Student Center, Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewers: Kristin Riley, senior Psychology Major from Warrenton, Virginia

Carlie Osbourne, senior Psychology Major from Independence, Virginia

KR = Kristin Riley

AR = Arkeif Robinson

CO = Carlie Osbourne

KR: Testing, say something.

AR: Arkeif

KR: OK, will you please state your name, your job title, and the name of the organization you work for?

AR: Arkeif Robinson, student assistant manager, Owens Food Court.

KR: Mk, how long have you worked at your current job?

AR: Five and a half years.

KR: That's a long time.

AR: Yes it is.

KR: Will you please tell me a little bit about your family background?

AR: Family background?

KR: Mhm, like, did both your parents work outside of the home? What did your parents do for a living?

AR: Oh yeah, they both work outside of the home. My mother works for UPS; my father is a security guard. That's it really.

KR: Mk, would you describe in detail a typical day at your job?

AR: Um, go in at 10:30, leave at 6. Serve customers and prepare food. That's about it.

KR: How did you come to have this job?

AR: Uh, freshman year I was walking around campus, it was actually it was orientation and they were outside, um, looking for workers. They pulled me aside and said do you need a job? And I said, yes of course. And since my first day at Tech, I've been working there.

KR: Wow, what do you like best about your job?

AR: Uh, the employees.

KR: Mhm.

AR: And meeting new people. Uh, you see new faces every day. And yeah, the best part is just working with the people I work with. Uh, that's how I established of friendships and that's how I got to know a lot of people, definitely the best part.

KR: What do you like least about your job?

AR: [Laughs] Uh, just, it's very strict. It's not loose at all, there's like, they are always on top of you about everything. And, there is just no leeway to, you know, relax and have fun with your job.

KR: Mhm

AR: And that's probably the least favorite. It's the strictness.

KR: Where do you live and what costs are involved for you in getting to work?

AR: Uh, I live pretty close to campus and it doesn't cost anything so I walk to work every day. I live close to the cemetery, so it's like a twenty-minute walk.

KR: Do you enjoy your typical workday and it's environment? And what would you change if you could?

AR: I do enjoy it actually. Cause we do get to talk to each other and have fun. The only think I would change is...what would I change?

KR: Would you change maybe the wages, the benefits, the schedule, the location?

AR: Yeah, yeah the wages. Definitely, if I could, I would love to get a higher wage. Uh, that's basically it really.

KR: Do you think that the amount of work that you put into your job is equivalent to the amount of pay you receive?

AR: Not at all. That's just cause I'm running around. That's why I think I deserve more than what I get now. Even though it's a lot, it's more than a lot of other people, but as much as we run around and as hard as we work, I do believe we should get paid higher.

KR: Mhm, I agree. Um, how do you feel about your coworkers? You said it a bit already.

AR: Yes, I love my coworkers.

KR: What are their backgrounds like?

AR: What do you mean?

KR: Like, are most of them students?

AR: Yeah, most of them are students. Um, there are some people who are not students, but we get along with everybody the same. I'm a pretty friendly person to work with. Yeah, I mean, I love everybody. [Laughs].

KR: Tell me one good experience you've had working at this job? Like anything good that stands out in your mind.

AR: Nothing really stands out, I mean, most of it is good.

KR: Yeah

AR: Just like I said, most of the time we just meet new people and establish a lot of friendships.

KR: Mhm

AR: And that's the best part of the job, really.

KR: How about a bad experience that stands out in your mind?

AR: Uh huh [Laughs]. Yeah, just the other week, I got accused of stealing after working there for like five and a half years. And finally somebody came up, you know, came and defended me and actually knew what was going on so there was, everything was cleared but just that fact that they accused me period was kind of, annoying, yeah.

KR: Mhm, um, could you tell me about a time you were about to walk away from this job?

AR: Yeah, that was a time. I thought about just quitting right there, cause I feel that they tried to; I don't want to sound [inaudible]. They tried to, uh, how can I say it.

KR: Like keep you in your place?

AR: Nah, they tried to, like, test my character basically. I mean they have known me for so long to even think that I would do something like that was kind of, you know, hurtful.

KR: Yeah

AR: So I did want to quit at that point, but they talked me out of it.

CO: What were some of the reasons that made you decide not to walk away?

AR: Um, like I said, they talked to me and they were like, and they apologized and everything was cool. I mean, not for a little while but eventually everything became better.

KR: Mhm. How do the students affect your work environment? Like the customer students?

AR: Like, actually they make it better. Most of the time the costumers are really nice, so I actually enjoy it 'cause most of the time they will sit there and talk to you which will make the time go by much faster. Especially, when you are on cashier or somewhere in the lonely shops, like Sweets.

KR: Sweets is so lonely, I hated working there, I'd always walk over to Philly and talk to Buzz.

AR: Yeah, it's so sad.

KR: How are the relationships between the managing positions and the lower ranked employees?

AR: The relationships are pretty cool. Most of the time we're all hanging out after work or on the weekends with each other. So all of us are mainly friends, just like with the student managers and office managers. Never really talk to the higher up managers 'cause you never see them as much, so. They are all so much older than us.

KR: Do you work anywhere else?

AR: Yes.

Kr: Explain what the other job is and why do you work there.

AR: The other job...is Nude Modeling. I work there because, I don't know, I love myself, I guess. I'm very open and free, I guess. I love my body, I love, I'm very comfortable with myself. Which is why I like it, its like a get-away job, just to be I guess.

KR: What is important for people to know about what you do on the job?

AR: What do I think is important? That's a tough question. Can you repeat the question again?

KR: What do you think is important for people to know about what you do? Maybe like other students that come in and think. What do you wish they would know?

AR: The only thing I can think is like the sanitary issue. I mean there's a lot that goes into that. I have to take extra precaution against like the whole sanitation and making sure the food is like good for us to eat like, it's not any, no germs, nothing like that, no major, nothing major like that. That's the only thing I can think of.

KR: I know when I worked there it was frustrating because people didn't understand that you couldn't control the kitchen. That was irritating. People would cry because there was like no mac n' cheese.

AR: Yeah something as little as taking like the tray back over the counter just to place piece of bread on there, because of sanitary issues.

KR: What advice would you give another student seeking a job at Virginia Tech?

AR: Just any job?

KR: Any job. Would you recommend them working there [Owens]?

AR: I would. I mean the advice I would give them is that you know this is not going to be your career, it's just your job so don't I mean take it seriously but don't ya know over do it, don't stress yourself out, don't put it above your school work basically. 'Cause I see a lot of people do that they'll work work and then they'll struggle in school and forget about why they actually came school, was to go to Tech not to work in the food court.

KR: Yeah, Where do you see yourself in 5 to 10 years?

AR: Still in school. Not a Tech but hopefully at a medical school. You know, 5-10 years probably ya know finishing up med school and being in, attending psychiatric school.

KR: Oh that's exciting? What do you want to go into with psychiatry?

AR: Forensic Psychology.

KR: Oh that's neat. How much school is that?

AR: I have 2 more years here and then I have 4 year of medical school and then 4 year of psychiatric school and then 2 years of forensic training.

KR: Wow

CO: Are you a psych major now?

AR: I have my bachelor degree in psychology already.

KR: He graduated

AR: Yeah, Right now I'm just my biochemistry degree.

CO: I'm a psych major

AR: Really, cool.

KR: Yeah me too. Have you, are going, taking classes right now?

AR: I will be in the summer time.

KR: Okay. What was it like when you were taking classes and working?

AR: It was stressful. Cause I worked 40 hours a week. I don't know if you knew buy I had my three brother here that I was taking care of too

KR: Are they still here?

AR: Umm two of them are here now and I had a full course load so it was very very stressful. I mean but it was all worth it. It was hard but, worth it.

KR: How old are your brothers?

AR: 14, 15 and 16

KR: So they were in high school, what was that like?

AR: It was tough and annoying!

KR: High school boys! Did they work too?

AR: Umm they did but, then I don't know what happened they just stopped working so it was pretty much all me. So I had to end up getting another job to pay their bills and feed them basically.

KR: Why did they come down here with you?

AR: Umm just to get away. Cause we're from Brooklyn so I was like it'd be much easier. And plus I was like their father figure anyway at home so it like they only listen to me so it like I'm the only one that could discipline them basically.

KR: Okay. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?

AR: nah.

KR: Okay. All right I think we're done!