

Andrew Bradley
American Studies – Interview Transcript
11/3/2008

AB - Will you please state your name, your job title, your age and the name of the organization you work for?

SK - My name is Stephanie Keymont, I am 20 years old and a Junior at Virginia Tech. I am a cashier at Rite Aid

AB - Where are you originally from, and what do your parents do for a living?

SK - I'm from Richmond, Virginia, and my Mom works as an X-Ray Tech at Saint Mary's hospital in Richmond, and my Dad works as an inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration.

AB - How long have you worked at your current job?

SK - I've worked there for a little over a year. I started working there back in August of 2007

AB - What do you enjoy most about working at Rite Aid?

SK - To be honest what I enjoy most is working with the people that I work with. My managers are really great and so are all of the other employees so we have a lot of fun at work.

AB - What do you enjoy least about working at Rite Aid?

SK - I would say, probably cashiering. A lot of the people we get are not as nice as you would like them to be to cashiers at times. I mean that's probably the worst part about it, but generally people are pretty nice.

AB - What are your general motivations behind working at Rite Aid? Why are you working there?

SK - Well, at the time when I applied, I was really just looking for a job to pay the bills. I kept working there because I liked working with the people so much, but the reason that I'm staying now is that I've actually been promised a promotion in March when I turn 21.

AB - How would you describe your treatment as an employee of Rite Aid, by your managers and co-workers?

SK - Yeah, definitely very good treatment. My manager actually, just, out of the blue brought me a cupcake the other day, so they're really nice.

AB - What was the single worst day you've had at work, and why was that the worst day?

SK - Well there have been a couple of bad ones. You, know having to go to work when you're sick is never good, and if you don't have any money, you have to work regardless, so I've had a couple of those days but, probably the most memorable one it was probably the worst and the funniest day at work that I've ever had. It was at Christmas time last year, and there was a lady that got really angry because she had been waiting in line for a really long time. There wasn't anything we could do about it because we didn't have any more employees. I had just come into work and she was trying to buy a bunch of Christmas stuff and she was so angry that she had to wait so long that she threw the Christmas tree at me across the counter and it landed on top of me. Then she proceeded to throw the rest of her items across the counter.

AB - Did it cut you or anything like that?

SK - No it didn't hurt me it was just, I mean it was really frustrating because I had just gotten there and it wasn't my fault at all. I don't know, it made me angry, but then I laughed about it.

AB - Have you ever just wanted to walk out in the middle of your shift and possibly quit? Have you done something like that before and were you punished?

SK - Probably the only times I've ever thought about it have been when I was sick. I mean there's certainly, you know, I mean of course when you're at work sometimes and you really don't want to be there it's like "Uhh I really want to leave." The only times I've seriously thought about it is when I have been seriously sick, and usually if I ask to leave because I'm sick they'll let me anyway, so I've never actually had to.

AB - Have you ever done anything that HAS resulted in you getting in trouble with your superiors while working at Rite Aid?

SK - There was one incident that I actually got written up for. I... we have to count our registers every night, to make sure that they're right and everything. I counted mine, and they always used to joke with me "Ohh you're a hundred dollars short" or something like that and we'd laugh about it like "Oh whatever" because almost always my register was perfect. I was actually twenty dollars short one time, and, don't know what happened, I might have accidentally given somebody a twenty dollar bill extra. Don't really know what happened to be completely honest. I mean there was nothing they could do about it. They didn't think that I stole it, but, you know, just company policy they had to write me up.

AB - What are the costs involved for you to get into work?

SK - Usually just gas. Right now I take the bus to class, so work is pretty much the only place I drive to, so gas is the only concern there. As far as other costs, I mean, you have to buy work clothes and things like that I guess, but, our dress is pretty casual so I haven't really had to buy a whole lot of new things. Really the gas would probably be it, and even then it's pretty close to my house so.

AB - Would you describe in detail a typical day for you at Rite Aid?

SK - Sure. I walk in and I go into the back and put my stuff into the stock room, and I come back up and clock in, and if I'm running the register, which lately I haven't been doing a lot, the managers will give me a register, and you know you log on, and count it and everything else. Pretty much if there's nothing to do in the store when you're running the register, you can kind of just stand up there and talk to managers, read a magazine if it's really dead, they don't like you to do that often, but a lot of times you'll have other things to do like inventory related things, or stocking, that sort of thing. If I'm not working the register, I go out on the floor and either straighten things, change the plan-o-grams where you know how items are stored on the shelves a lot of times they have to change those, so you have to move all that stuff around. I mean that's pretty much it, unless I'm working on truck day where you have to unload the truck and stock the shelves, and that's never fun.

AB - How does Virginia Tech affect your business?

SK - We get a lot of students and professors that come in. I've certainly recognized a bunch of my own professors that come in, which sometimes is a little bit awkward. I worked over this past summer when all the students were gone, and it was absolutely dead in the store, and as soon as September hit we were flooded, so I would definitely say that a lot of our customers are students.

AB - Is the pay satisfactory? Do you believe you deserve more, either based on your performance or other economic factors?

SK - Based on my performance I would definitely say yes. They've told me I'm a really good worker, you know I enjoy my job so I try to do the best I can, and they also told me I was getting promoted. I actually did get a raise. I started out at seven dollars and I got a raise after I had been working there for a year, and my manager put in for the biggest raise that I could get which was four percent, so I got twenty-eight cents extra, so I now make seven twenty-eight. I would

definitely like to be making more money, but I understand the cost of living in Blacksburg isn't really that expensive.

AB - Do you know how much the promotion would yield you?

SK - I'll be promoted to a shift supervisor, so I think usually when you're promoted you get a dollar raise, so I'll be making about eight fifty.

AB - What kind of benefits do you get as an employee of Rite Aid if any, obviously you said there's room for advancement or promotion, but do you have any benefits or discounts?

SK - All employees get a 20% discount, and during the Christmas season they'll give you I think like one day every two weeks or one day every month when you get 30% off and it's for Christmas shopping, because you know we get a lot of Christmas presents in. So that's kind of nice. If you're working full-time you get one weeks paid vacation, and you can get actually pretty good health insurance, and I think they actually just changed it now where you can get health insurance even if you're working part-time. So it's actually a pretty good job to have considering the state of the economy, because there are some pretty good benefits working there.

AB - Would you rather be working somewhere else, even if it maybe paid a little bit less, or are you pretty happy with your job at Rite Aid?

SK - Definitely not if it paid less. If it paid a lot more I would consider it, and I even know now there are probably are a lot of other jobs that do pay more that I could work, but like I said before I really just like the atmosphere that I'm in, and the hours are really flexible, and everyone's really just helpful there so I just don't really want to leave.

AB - Would you recommend Rite Aid as a possible part- or full-time job to one of your friends or family members if they were considering it?

SK - Definitely, if it was my Rite Aid. I don't know about others.

AB - Do you consider yourself lucky to have the job at Rite Aid considering the fragility of the economy and the availability of jobs at this moment in time?

SK - Absolutely. I've seen a lot of people, friends of mine, that have graduated college and they're still looking for jobs. I mean I'm definitely not saying I'm going to stay in this job for years and years to come, but you know I just feel lucky to have a job right now. I'm able to pay my bills and things and that's definitely good.

AB - What kind of advice would you give to a young person seeking a way to make a living in this day and age?

SK - Pretty much, start looking for jobs early. Don't bank on getting one job that you really want, because it doesn't always happen. Even if you do have that job and you're thinking about quitting or something, start looking for another one early. I feel like people kind of, you know they'll quit a job and kind of pull an "Oh crap what do I do now" you know because they don't have another job lined up and it's not as easy to find one as they think. Pretty much, just be prepared for the worst I guess.

AB - If you were to have children in the future, what would say to them about working a job similar to yours?

SK - I would definitely encourage them to. It's, you know, for one thing working when you're young it teaches you responsibility. As far as working a job similar to mine, I mean, I find that it's helpful with people skills and things like that, having to deal with customers all the time, you know smiling at somebody that throws a Christmas tree at you is kind of tough to do, but you know I feel like when you're working in an environment that closely with people, it helps you a lot.

AB - How are you generally treated by your customers, and how do you treat them?

SK - Generally customers are really nice. We have a lot of regulars that come in that would like to stand and talk to you forever. Generally customers just want you to be polite to them, they want you to be helpful, and that's what I try to do all the time, in fact most employees at Rite Aid try to do that all the time. Certainly you get your bad egg every once in a while, and we kind of have a couple of bad regulars that come in, too, so we kind of just know what to expect when they come in. Yeah usually people are pretty nice. We actually got someone who was complaining on our customer index phone call messages that we weren't talking to them enough and that we were too busy doing our work, so, that kind of gives you an idea of how friendly people usually are.

AB - Do you think it would be a lot different if you were working in a city environment, as opposed to a small town like Blacksburg, or not necessarily a small town, but a gated community?

SK - I definitely think so, because people just don't seem very rushed around here. They're coming in to get their prescription; they know the pharmacist really well. They recognize us and they sit and talk to us for a while. I feel like in a city environment people are a lot more rushed and it's a lot less personal. So yeah I would definitely say it has something to do with being a small town.

AB - Do you have anything else you would like to add?

SK - Rite Aid is a really great place, come shop there.

AB - Thank you very much Stef.

SK - You're welcome.