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PRIDE

Charlotte's African-American Magazine

The Health and Education Issue

PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL

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HEALTH

Remarkable man, Remarkable medicine

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TC on TV

Hollywood hits right from home

Last May, Toochukwa (TC) Anyachonkeya landed a speaking part in “Iron Man 3.” For many years the Nigerian American had worked as a part-time actor and model, but after making it to the Big Screen, TC decided to give up his sales job, acquire a Screen Actors Guild card and pursue acting full-time.

His resume now boasts such movies and TV shows as “The Remaining,” “Under the Dome” and “Homeland.”

Yet the 30-year-old has never had to travel to Los Angeles or New York. All the acting has been while living right here in Charlotte, commuting only as far Wilmington.

‘A hot spot’

“A lot of opportunities are coming to Charlotte,” he says. “It’s funny, because I have friends who moved to New York, and they’re struggling. And then me just being here, I’ve been blessed with a lot of opportunities. Charlotte is going to be a hot spot.”

TC and I met on the set of “Homeland” in an inconspicuous warehouse in north Charlotte. We sat in folding chairs at one end of the warehouse, cluttered with stacks of props. TC and about 15 other extras were waiting to film their scene.

But just 40 feet from this humble corner stood a portal to Hollywood. The door, protected by two security guards and marked by a light that flashed and buzzed when everyone needed to be quiet, led to the set where actress Morena Baccarin was transforming herself into Brody’s wife.

About a year ago, TC sat in a similar room full of extras on the set of “Iron Man 3” in Wilmington. Even though he had been contracted as a background



Toochukwa Anyachonkeya's career as a model and actor is thriving here in Charlotte.



actor, he still had prayed that somehow God would provide a speaking part. Sure enough, a casting person walked into the room asking for an African-American male to play “Iron Patriot Fan No. 1.”

TC jumped at the chance. All his preparation and experience as an actor funneled into that one moment. He nailed the performance, and when he finished, everyone on the set applauded. Just as exciting, after the film’s final edits, his



scene remained in the movie. “Toochukwa Anyachonkeya” appears on the credits, and he will earn residuals.

From modeling to acting

TC’s path into acting began in college, where he studied art and wrote poetry. (He has published a book of poems titled “Deeper than Rhymes.”) He joined a college modeling troupe that participated in runway competitions against other colleges. Eventually, he auditioned for a modeling agency and then moved to a bigger agency, Carolina Talent.

In 2008, TC began doing commercials, which led to work as an extra in movies and TV shows. He now works with agent Marc Soper at Carolina Talent.

“Actors are getting continuous work right here in North Carolina, to where they’re making a living doing it,” says Soper, adding that when he joined Carolina Talent in 2009, only 30 percent of the business came from acting and voiceover work. It has since increased to about 60 percent.

“The more Hollywood and New York see that there are very talented people in North Carolina, like TC, the better they’re going to think, ‘Hey, I can get the actors I need there. I don’t necessarily have to bring everybody from LA or New York,’” says Soper.

In addition to the emerging talent pool, Soper attributes the growth of the North Carolina film industry to tax incentives for production companies, the attractive climate and diverse settings just hours away — rural, urban, mountain, beach and military.

For more and more aspiring actors like TC, Charlotte is becoming a place where Hollywood dreams can come true. ■