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Building Social Bridges
by entrepreneurial thinking



Role models

Cyprus





Leatitia Tchakoute

“Be focus, be determined and work hard”



Introduction

My name is Leatitia Tchakoute, I am 24 years old and I am in Cyprus for the last 3 years. Originally I am from Cameroon and I came in Cyprus as a refugee. At the moment I study at the University of Nicosia and I am the founder of Aphrogee which is small social enterprise of unique designs inspired by Africa by African artisans and craftsmen. Just to inform you that a portion of the Apogee’s profits go to support refugees/asylum seekers.

First years in Cyprus

When I arrived in Cyprus, I started socialising and be a part of the African community in Cyprus I was a bit shocked about how people were behaving (I mean the African refugees – immigrants). Through my observations I realised that there was a misunderstanding. The local citizens didn’t understand what it means to be a refugee. And also the refugees didn’t understanding why they left their countries. What I knew from African people and culture it was not what I was seeing from them in Cyprus. So I decided to try to change things and as a motivational speaker I started record my voice and sent it to different people in the African community in order to motivate them and make them be the best version of their selves. However, I couldn’t do it forever alone, it was heavy and people were asking for more and more



The creation of Aphrogee:

I said to myself that I need to find something else and showing it to the local community. I started realising that my people (African community) had strength and beautiful skills but the way the society is build, does not allowed them to show those skills. So I was thinking how to show to local people what means to be a refugee and to make them understand that the refugees are strong and have some great skills. I started observing the consumption habits of the locals and I saw that most people like restaurants and shopping. So I said that I am going to start my fashion. I am going to create t-shirts which is easy for me. I would use the t-shirt as a board and I will include African patterns. Therefore, I created Aphrogee and the purpose was to show the beauty that African people can bring to Cyprus. Through Aphrogee we have the possibility to support refugees by using their talents on handmade things. In addition, when we sell t-shirts from Afrogee a percentage of the profit goes to support refugees.

Social Contacts

My first social contacts were the friends and people from the African community. I have also met Phoenix Project which they help me on the Afrogee project, how to arrange things, organise and solve different issues. I have also met different Cypriots who supported me a lot in different ways.

My skills and Characteristics

I think the first is to have self - confidence. In addition, to be optimistic and have faith in life. I am a religious person and I believe that if I am still alive it means that I have something great to bring. Another characteristic is hard work. I realised that early and I started work on myself: I decided to finish school and enter the university. Furthermore, I am always focus on what I have on my mind and determined. In overall, I am a hardworking person and I don't fear failure.

Advices to immigrants, refugees and asylum - seekers

The first thing that I want to tell them is that they decided to survive and to leave their country. They make it and this means that there is a reason for this. Many people didn't make it to arrive here so when you are lucky enough to make it and arrive here you have to remember the reasons that brought you here. I think the reasons are to show the best of you. You have something great and not everyone has it. So my advice to them is to give their best and to know that if there are here, it means that they are still have the possibility to make their best.

PARTNERS

COORDINATOR



**VEREIN NIEDERSÄCHSISCHER BILDUNGSINITIATIVEN E.V.
(VNB)**

GERMANY

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