9DIGITS

9Digits: Three college freshmen fight against the odds of being undocumented while on campus without a social security number. Some of them defy the odds, one of them battles depression. Being admitted into the class of 2020 at Timzy University in 2016 also means that their president is Ronald White (A Donald Trump Inspiration).

Synopsis

9Digits follows three lives of undocumented students, one pair being black Kaju twins from a Kajubo (fake African country) and the other individual is a white Irish female in college, as they battle the struggles of an undocumented status in the 21st century.

This contemporary story commences in 2014, senior year of high school where the college application process begins, and follows their lives up until they graduate in 2019, when hopefully all three of them will get to walk across the stage with their diploma. 9Digits will feature five problems that all undocumented students face: revealing their truth to their friends, being alone, not having privileges that may or may not affect their social life, and how hard they work but are constantly tried. The pilot episode quickly touches on their academic progress in their individual high schools. The Kaju twins attend the same high school, while Einin attends a different one. They live in two different bubbles and do not meet until later on in college. The setting for this film is situated in New York City and in an urban college campus. The Kaju twins consists of Natuk (pronounced as “Na-took”) and Naya (pronounced as “Na-ya”), both are smart and have their personal strengths and weaknesses. The white Irish girl is Einin (pronounced as “a-neen”). Einin is a free-spirited dancer who has an exceptional way around the dance floor. She is a family person and wants to support her family in the best way possible, and also has plans to pursue a STEM major in order to procure a financially rewarding job.

9Digits takes the comedic approach in highlighting obstacles undocumented can cause in the lives of those who are affected. My inspiration for this approach is Insecure written by Issa Rae; the characters confront reality flaws when it comes to relationships and stereotypes as contemporary black women. In the same manner, I would hope to remind my viewers that undocumented individuals live “almost normal” lives like us, US citizens. By strictly giving the African-American and Caucasian ethnic background to the three protagonists, it is my hope to reverse the mainstream ideology of the Mexican identity, a synonym word for illegal immigrant who crossed the border. What does it mean to be American and how much sweat and pain will it take to become American? Is the broken immigration system more than a line of immigrants that are based on classism, from wealthy to poor? Those are the questions that I hope my audiences ask themselves.

Another theme 9Digits hopes to address is the coming out of the “legal” closet to your friends, with the idea of risk involved. This can be showed in different formats. Definitely through a basic introduction, such as in a mid-season episode when Natuk comes out to his best friend/girlfriend, who offers her support, love, and emotional protection. Einin is a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) student but we only find out through a revelation scene of some kind, perhaps through her conversation with a professor or some other form, maybe even during the reign of president-elect Ronald White.
One might wonder how this very serious, touchy issue can be made comical. As the three of them proceed with their college years, relationships weaken and break, new ones are formed and strengthened, and many hard lessons are learned. The comedy aspect streams from the continuous interactions with their campus that molds and chisels their personas. This encompasses scenarios such as failing a class, staying up to submit a paper, partaking in sports, having funny, relatable friends who find themselves in awkward situations, roommate hostilities, heart breaks, and scenarios involving first encounters with alcohol.

I strongly believe that a television series with this concept is needed because I, as an advocate for undocumented students, want to educate individuals to empathize more on the topic. This could lead to solutions on how to solve the problem rather than resort to harsh deportation. Only two protagonists out of three become activists during their college careers. Specifically, Natuk and Einin become activists for undocumented in their schools because it directly affects them, in comparison to Naya. In multiple scenes, they participate to make Timzy University a sanctuary campus after Ronald’s speech of deportation. However, 9Digits highlights the fear that they will experience when it comes to protesting because in their minds, they are afraid an arrest would generate otherwise avoidable immigration-related issues. In the end, Natuk and Einin are able to meet each other through a panel for undocumented students to share their narratives and are able to bond over their similar experiences. Their experiences and feelings are captured and exemplified by the following quote: “Narratives are ways through which power is inscribed for undocumented students […] because they are ways through which meaning [of identity] is processed” (DeAngelo et al. 226).

During the series, there is also the scenario of Naya falling for a very privileged and sheltered Indian boy. This relationship is important in exploring the idea of sexuality and femininity and the fragility of such experiences for an undocumented woman who falls for someone who turns out to be the worst possible person. The Indian boy turns out to be an ignorant, and self-involved individual with no real regard for others. His name is Vikram, but his friends, who also all happen to be white, call him Vic. Vikram meets Naya at a banking internship in New York City and the two of them end up as coworkers. The difference is that she is simply volunteering, while Vic is working full-time. Vikram is a well-off and handsome man. Over time, Vikram gains Naya’s trust and she eventually reveals her status as an undocumented immigrant to him during a party, where she was very drunk. Soon after, Vic starts to become more aggressive and assertive with Naya, and this eventually culminates in him blackmailing Naya. Vic demands favors of Naya both sexually and academically, and threatens to expose both her and her brother if she were to refuse any of his demands, or even consider telling anyone about their arrangement. Her friends begin to notice that she behaves differently as her abusive relationship with Vic changes her behavior and attitude.

In another story arc, Einin hears jokes about deportation from her friends. Even though she feels more accepted and less targeted because she is white, she is increasingly aware of her status when her friends make lighthearted remarks and comments regarding immigration. This is because “for instance, the temporary nature of DACA produces fear and anxiety for many undocumented students, who realize that the order can quickly be overturned with a new presidential administration or through federal court orders” (DeAngelo, 217). She eventually begins to drift away from her soccer friends when she finds herself unable to relate to them and their privilege-induced jokes. She eventually finds herself in a friendlier, more culturally inclusive group of friends, with the majority of them being Latinos. She is drawn to people who can relate to her uncertainties as an undocumented student.
**Character Sheet** - Character names, age, country of origin, and an interest.

**Naya:** one of the Kaju twins. She hails from the lands of Kajubi and came to the US at 14. She is invested in learning the history of her region’s people after the slave trade. She begins college at 18 years old and is one of the youngest people to celebrate her birthday in her friend group. She does not like to exercise but she looks like she does and she is also someone you never want to debate if you don’t have polished facts.

**Natuk:** One of the Kaju twins. He came from Kajubi with Naya at the same time. Natuk does not like chocolate or any chocolate related items. He is a risk-taker when it comes to his hair and the different hairstyles such as fade, Mohawk, etc. Natuk also lacks self-confidence and has a need for validation from others. He hopes to be a film critic and documentarian in his 30’s. His activism during his time at Timzy propels him to want to do something for his community which happens to not have Green Cards.

**Linh:** She is an independent woman who does not let anyone walk all over her. Her grades do not reflect her smartness to the fullest but she is street smart. She is one of the founders of a voluntary organization that helps refugees to adjust to their new lifestyle, like speaking English, knowing how to get a credit card, bank account, etc. She is an international student from Vietnam and she actually does not like pho. She is allergic to it. Natuk’s girlfriend. She is also his first girlfriend and she is a psychology major.

**Einin:** She moved from Ireland when she was a minor. She loves soccer and her favorite team is Mankester United. She always visits her family whenever she gets the chance and she is pursuing a 3-2 program with an Ivy League school for Computer Science. She qualifies as a DACA student at the beginning of her first-year. She is on the varsity soccer team and plays a Forward position.

**Moruka:** Mother and Widow of the Kaju twins. Her husband passed away during the twins’ time in high school. She is a Registered Nurse (RN) and has been the breadwinner since then. She wants to see her children succeed and she does everything in her power to try to secure them a higher education, hopefully with their Green Cards. She is a very fearful character and it sometimes elicits angry responses when it comes to disclosing her identity.

**Pedro:** Is Natuk’s best friend and their “bro-mance” together is strongly cemented. Pedro also plays a gay character and he supports his best friend, Natuk, when he becomes overwhelmed. He hails from Kingston, Massachusetts. He is also a phenomenal Hip-Hop dancer and is one of the main stars in a dance show. His presence in this show validates that not all gay men are attracted to all men and he stands for another symbolism of coming out of the shadows due to his sexual identity. Pedro’s heritage is Mexican and he is a US citizen.

**Vikram:** is well-off and a handsome adult. His parents came to the US after hitting the jackpot in the stocks market. He grew up in a very white suburban town where in school, he is the diversity. However, he does not feel racially oppressed because of the wealth factor. He is an ABCD, (American-Born Confused Desi). He dates Naya in the series.

**3 black girlfriends:** These are the friends that Naya hangs out with. There is nothing entirely unique about them except their majors. These are support characters in Naya’s presence in the series.

The remaining characters are the students, the faculty (that represents Timzy as an institution) that interact with each other on a day-to-day basis.