

Omarosa debuts sizzling new dating show on TV One

Written by Pharoh Martin NNPA National Correspondent



WASHINGTON (NNPA) - TV One's new television show Donald J. Trump Presents "The Ultimate Merger" sounds more like business program about joint ventures than an African-American dating show - but it isn't.

Billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump and the producers of the highly-successful NBC reality program "The Apprentice" have brought their can't miss formula to TV One hoping that one of their most infamous Apprentice contestants can close the deal on love.

If nothing else, Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth, usually just known as Omarosa, always makes for good television. Trump knows this. That's why he invited his season one contestant back for a second time as a participant on Celebrity Apprentice and has now green-lighted her a reality show of her own.

In the more than 20 reality and talk shows that she has appeared on Omarosa's on-screen persona is unapologetic, manipulative, contentious and down right mean. The self-described "b----" and "diva" has also been called an ice queen, a race baiter, and worse by more than just the media.

The 36-year-old Ohio native has made a career of being a professional reality show shrew. She doesn't care. It's worked for her so far, judging from the avalanche of bankable opportunities and publicity as of late. In interviews, Omarosa has claimed that the mean queen seen on screen is only a persona.

"When you ask how much of that is really me, I'm a competitive woman, I'm an outgoing woman, a charismatic woman," Omarosa said in an interview with the NNPA News Service. "There are so many facets to my life that this show introduces another facet of who I am to audiences."

The former political consultant-turned-reality star walks a thin line between reality and "reality". After her appearance on the original "Apprentice" in 2004, Omarosa told Jet Magazine that the show's producers edited the show to portray her as a villain saying that those types of "shows don't happen, nor do they portray actual reality. They are constructed reality."

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She added: "Historically, African-Americans have been portrayed negatively on reality television. We don't come across well. You've got to start looking and saying, 'Is that really how all African-Americans are?' Because they are trying to say that this is representative of our people." Five years later, Omarosa continued with her same venomous persona, even embracing it after many major media outlets like E! and TV Guide named her the most villainous reality television star of all time. In 2009, Omarosa was accosted by talk show host Wendy Williams after a catty exchange for reinforcing the "angry Black woman" stereotype in the media. Omarosa replied by saying, "I would rather be an angry Black woman than a buffoon."

And a buffoon she is not. Omarosa has cashed in on her controversial persona and turned her 15 minutes of fame into a continuous weekly prime time slot. But how will Omarosa do with her own dating show?

Not bad actually. Omarosa's "Type A" personality works well as a domineering beauty looking for a fellow of equal yoke. Although she contends that her search for a mate is "genuine" she's trying to blow away mounting smoke building around a series of photos that have surfaced her with her arm-in-arm with Green Mile star Michael Clarke Duncan at different events, to which she issued the standard issue public relations explanation that they are "just friends".

An entertaining trailer for the "Ultimate Merger" suggests that the dating show won't lack in the sex and drama department. At one point, Omarosa questions if she'll make it into heaven because of all of the debauchery going on, which is interesting considering Omarosa is a seminary student.

"I don't think it's unusual that Christians date nor is it unusual that Christians kiss," Omarosa said. "These aren't things that are unique to people in the secular world. I never read in the Bible where dating is off limits."

Still, the highly entertaining show never goes overboard as some sensationalized reality shows tend to go. The Ultimate Merger specifically cast more mature accomplished Black males (and one White male) as Omarosa's suitors, which is a departure from their competition.

The producers of ABC's the "Bachelor" and the "Bachelorette" must not think that people who are not White are marketable enough to feature as romantic interests on their shows. VH1 proved that they are with their controversial-yet-entertaining dating reality shows like "Flavor of Love" and "I Love New York". Yet, they also proved that anybody can be a coveted commodity of desire even if, as in the case of show stars Flavor Flav and Tiffany "New York" Pollard, they have the aesthetic appeal of a Lord of the Rings character or are just off-the-charts crazy.

"I think it's important to note that the "Bachelor" and the "Bachelorette" franchises never had African-Americans as their primary talent," Omarosa said. "As far as what they do at VH1, they are very entertaining and I really did enjoy watching them but our show is different in that we believe that love is serious business. It's not something where you're running around with roses and that sort of thing. If you're truly going to build a life together then you have to start with a serious foundation."

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The best way to describe the “Ultimate Merger” is to think of it as a dating version of “The Apprentice.” So instead of weekly episodes of seeing business savvy people closing deals and coming up with marketing plans with the hopes of landing a cushy well-paying job, 12 successful and eligible bachelors are put through the paces on challenges that play upon their weaknesses, test their capabilities, and draw out their true intentions as they to prove their love for “Lady O”, as they sometimes refer to Omarosa.

It's a really big ego fest for her. The show's premiere episode opens up much like “The Apprentice” with a shot of Omarosa in the back seat of a black town car pulling up to Trump's New York office towers and then, inside Trump's office where the billionaire, very corporate like, instructs Omarosa that he would like to help her dating life. He then hands her a brief case with folders of a dozen handpicked bachelors inside.

The elimination scenes are also similar to the NBC show in that three of the worst performers must argue their case before Omarosa so they don't get what will become the Ultimate Merger-equivalent catch phrase of “You're fired”, which we will find out on June 17 when the show debuts. The eight-episode show was filmed at the Trump International Hotel and Tower in Las Vegas.

In addition to the attractive Apprentice-like production, the show wins more so than the lead talent with the 12 suitors, who like Omarosa herself, are also successful and ego-driven. They range from a foreign currency trader, a lawyer and a fashion designer to a special events company owner, a Christian rap artist, a former NFL linebacker and known recording artists like Al B. Sure! And Ray Lavender. “I thought it was wonderful to have 12 type-A personalities in a room, as you know, I am very much a type-A personality,” Omarosa said in the NNPA interview. “I thought it was great to have very smart, accomplished, outgoing, charismatic African-American men and having them compete and show their talents. I thought it was a fascinating process.”