

Current Biography®

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Ime Archibong

Born: ca. 1981

Occupation: Technology executive

As head of New Product Experimentation (NPE) at Meta, the company formerly known as Facebook, technology executive Ime Archibong became well aware that the process of developing successful new products and technologies is neither easy nor immune from failures and false starts. “For most startups, the first idea you come up with isn’t likely to be the one that grows,” he said, as quoted by Joel Khalili for *TechRadar* (3 Dec. 2021). “The average experience is one of a lot of pivots, a lot of tries and a lot of failures.” Indeed, Archibong’s own career trajectory featured its own series of pivots. A talented college basketball player who captained Yale University’s Division I team, he left sports behind to pursue a career in engineering, initially working for the technology company IBM. After realizing that his interests lay more in business development than in engineering, he transitioned to a career in that field and in 2010 joined Facebook—then still a relatively new player in the technology sphere—as vice president of product partnerships.

Over the next decade, Archibong established himself as a passionate advocate both for Facebook’s products and features, particularly its community-building functions, and for diversity within the company itself. “When you have people sitting around the table that have diverse backgrounds or cognitive differences in their backgrounds, better products end up getting built,” he told Nikita Richardson in an interview for *Fast Company* (16 Jan. 2015). “We see this time



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Canadian Arctic. He wrote as if Inuit women were commodities, she said, adding: “When I read it, I thought, why is it that aboriginal women are never in charge of their own sexuality? Why are we presented as women who can be used?”

The characters in the collection navigate the pain of erasure and alienation. Some, like Dunning’s mother, endure the brutality of residential schools. “Strong currents of anger and courage propel the Inuit characters,” Candace Fertile wrote in her review for *Alberta Views* (1 Mar. 2018). “They are survivors.” Families are abandoned and women are used, but there is also tenderness, Fertile wrote. In the story “Elipsee,” a woman is dying of cancer. She and her husband take a trip to a lake on the advice of a shaman. The award-winning story, Fertile wrote, “combines the love of a couple for each other with their spiritual foundations.” The stories also shed light on the unique Inuit culture and traditions, including Inuit language that Dunning peppers throughout the stories and supports with a glossary. The collection earned Dunning the Danuta Gleed Literary Award for best short fiction debut by a Canadian writer in 2018. The book was translated into French in 2021.

“If we could present as non-Indigenous children, it made our paths easier.”

ESKIMO PIE AND TAINNA: THE UNSEEN ONES

In 2020, Dunning published *Eskimo Pie: A Poetics of Inuit Identity*, a short book combining poetry and prose. In it, Dunning wrestles with her desire to share her work despite fears of betraying her culture and rejection from non-Inuit writers. She spoke about her experiences as an Inuit writer in her conversations with Frizzell. “In terms of the Canadian lit scene, I know other Inuit writers, they’re afraid to publish and they’re afraid to go through that process because we know what it’s like to be colonized and you don’t want your work re-colonized,” she said.

In 2021, Dunning published her second collection of short stories called *Tainna: The Unseen Ones*. The six stories contained in the book explore the experiences of Inuit people living in southern Canada, an experience that is particularly important, and personal, to Dunning. “I want that visibility for us,” she told Sue Carter for *Inuit Art Quarterly* (7 Dec. 2021), noting that Inuit are often asked to prove that they are authentically Indigenous by answering questions like “Do you speak your language?” and “Do you eat raw meat?” Dunning’s advice to her Indigenous students, she told Carter, “is that when people question how you look, or whether or not you can speak what should have been your mother tongue, just ask them quietly, ‘Why are you asking me that?’” in order to “shift the power in the conversation.”

Robert J. Wiersema, who reviewed *Tainna: The Unseen Ones* for the Canadian magazine *Quill and Quire* (1 Apr. 2021), identified a common theme among

an outbreak of Ebola that began in western Africa in 2013. He became director-general of the China CDC in 2017, and by early 2020 was tasked with managing China's response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. During that early period, his work focused on attempts to determine the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its means of transmission as well as efforts to contain and monitor its spread. Although Gao and other Chinese health authorities later faced some international criticism over their handling of the early pandemic, including allegations that they did not investigate the possibility of human-to-human transmission quickly enough, Gao continued to emphasize the importance of working together to combat the pandemic and develop means of preventing and treating COVID-19. "The virus is our common enemy," he told Jon Cohen in an interview for *Science* (27 Mar. 2020), "not the enemy of any person or country."



Photo by J Marchn, via Wikimedia Commons.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Known in China as Gao Fu and in English-speaking countries as George Fu Gao, Gao was born in Shanxi Province, China, on November 15, 1961. After completing his secondary education, he enrolled in Shanxi Agricultural University, where he studied to become a veterinarian. That field of study was not his choice, however, as it had been selected for him through China's bureaucratic education system. He earned his bachelor's degree from the university in 1983 and went on to pursue graduate studies at Beijing Agricultural University. During that period, Gao developed an interest in virology and shifted his academic focus toward that field. "This changed my whole life," he recalled to Geoff Watts for the *Lancet* (28 July 2018). "I transformed myself from a vet into an infectious disease researcher." He completed a master's degree in 1986 and began teaching virology. In 1988, he received the Young Scientist Award from the China Association for Science and Technology. Pursuing formal studies in his desired field, Gao left China for the United Kingdom, where he enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Oxford in 1991. He earned a doctorate in molecular virology in 1994.

EARLY CAREER AS A LAWYER

After finishing law school Jackson clerked for a number of important judges, including Judge Patti B. Saris of the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts, Bruce M. Selya of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Rhode Island, and Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. In 2000, she entered private practice as an associate with the law firm Goodwin Proctor in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2002, she moved to the Feinberg Group in Washington, DC.

From 2003 to 2005 Jackson worked as an assistant special counsel to the US Sentencing Commission, an agency that oversees sentencing by federal courts. Her time there piqued her interest in public defense. Wanting to learn more about how the criminal justice system actually worked, she spent two years as an assistant federal public defender, handling cases before the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit. Although her role consisted mostly of researching and writing, she also won a number of victories against government prosecutors that either shortened or erased defendants' prison sentences. During this time, she also worked on the cases of several Guantanamo Bay detainees who were being held without formal charges. In 2007, she returned to private practice with the DC-based firm Morrison and Foerster.

In 2009, Jackson was nominated by President Obama for vice chair of the US Sentencing Commission and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate. As a commissioner she focused on sentencing disparities, and in particular supported amendments to reduce sentences for nonviolent drug offenses. For example, during this time the commission made sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine offenses more lenient.

EARLY JUDICIAL CAREER AND SUPREME COURT NOMINATION

In 2012, President Obama nominated Jackson to the federal judiciary on the US District Court for the District of Columbia. She was confirmed early the following year by the Senate with bipartisan support. During her career as a US District Court judge Jackson developed a reputation for being extremely thorough and writing long opinions on contentious cases. In 2019, for example, she wrote a 118-page ruling denying President Donald Trump's counsel Donald McGahn immunity from testifying in Trump's impeachment trial. The opinion earned significant attention for her statement that "presidents are not kings."

Jackson's growing profile as an experienced and respected judge brought her consideration for even more prominent positions. In 2021, President Joe Biden nominated her for the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. Although her appointment was opposed by many Republicans, she received Senate approval in a 53–44 vote. On the appeals court she again drew attention for ruling against executive privilege claims by the Trump administration. Then, after less than a year in

Lincoln Peirce

Born: October 23, 1963

Occupation: Cartoonist

Middle-schooler Nate Wright, Lincoln Peirce's most celebrated cartoon character, has become a long-standing favorite among young readers since the *Big Nate* novels first appeared in 2010. With eye-catching covers showcasing Nate sporting jeans, a yellow T-shirt, and a blue towel fastened around his neck, posing as a cape, young readers realize, as they devour the novels, that the outfit is only a speck of Nate's adventurous, larger-than-life personality.

Though the character only reached a wider audience in the 2010s, *Big Nate* has been the protagonist of an ongoing cartoon strip whose first appearance in newspapers dates back to 1991. The idea of adapting the strip to a novel format did not come to Peirce until the 2000s when children's books that combined text and cartoons gained special attention from publishing houses. When the first of eight *Big Nate* novels, *Big Nate: In a Class by Himself*, was released, the beloved cape-wearing Nate, who until then had found only a moderate readership, earned a global following. "I think it's really an unlikely story that after the strip had been around for almost twenty years, it gained this second life," Peirce told Alex Dueben in an interview for *The Beat* (26 Oct. 2016).

While 2016 marked the end of the novels, the *Big Nate* animated series debuted on the streaming service Paramount Plus in 2022, giving fans of Peirce's work new adventures of Nate to look forward to. At the same time, he also began penning new children's stories.



Photo by GeorgeJK61, via Wikimedia Commons.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

Born on October 23, 1963, in Ames, Iowa, Lincoln Peirce grew up in Durham, New Hampshire, where his family moved shortly after his birth. As a young boy, he was captivated by the animated *Popeye* cartoons featured in a local television show and learned to appreciate the ingenuity, surrealism, and absurdity fostered