



## Oral History Transcriptions

### **“The Living History of Little Jamaica” Digital Map Tour**

#### **Eglinton West Origins: Slide 4**

##### ***D’Andra Montaque tells what Little Jamaica means to her and who its people are***

**D’Andra Montaque:** Little Jamaica to me is home. It is the place that I was born and raised., it's the place. I always return to, if I ever left, it's the place that I always came to when I needed somewhere to bring back the feeling of connection, the feeling of fun, the feeling of not being alone, being in a village, having a village. It's people to me are Italian people, Portuguese people, Jamaican people, Grenadian people ,Saint Vincent people or Vincentian people and other Caribbean countries. It's people are young and old, people who are struggling to still figure out what their identity here is in Canada and who they are in this city. If they have to be themselves or if they have to conform to what this city tells them through different lenses, who they should be.

#### **Marlington Apartments: Slide 2**

##### ***Jay Douglas talks about his mother Naureen's life in Toronto***

**Jay Douglas:** Naureen, she couldn't call those days a domestic worker she called home once and it was like a parade day. Oh, we didn't even, We had to ask. My grandma was working with some white folks in Montego Bay and we had to get permission to use the phone. Oh yeah. I had to get permission, but it was great.

Spoke for a little while, but that was the only phone call. But she wrote a lot of times a week. She sent home money for me to go to a technical school for me to be boarded with some family in Montego Bay. Oh my God. She had four kids, brothers and sisters to help and her mom and dad, and when she was here, God bless Naureen she couldn't make enough to help us, so she changed her name and went to the United States under another name to do domestic work.

And I, when I came, I said, Why did you do that? She says, Son, the dollar wasn't moving fast enough in Canada. It ain't saying nothing. So I had to go. She had to go there to make more money and she helped us and sent home enough that we could buy more cows so we could milk and sell the milk.

Yeah. And till this day, God bless her, she passed away when she, she would go back and forth cause the dollar was bigger. And when she came, I never forgot it. When we got the Bloor subway, we thought it was the world's greatest subway. She laughed at us.

#### **Marlington Apartments: Slide 4**

#### ***Elaine Lloyd-Robinson's first memories of the Little Jamaica neighbourhood when she moves to Toronto as a young girl***

**Elaine Lloyd-Robinson:** My first memory of Little Jamaica would've taken place 1975. And um, my family lived on Oakwood. I just came from Jamaica and this was, they brought us up on Eglinton and it was the closest thing that looked like Jamaica, cuz there was Jamaican stores and you could get a, a beef patty and you could, you saw people that look like you, and then when they open their mouth, they sound like you. Right? So that was my first introduction to culture. Being Jamaican and now being in Canada and seeing a place that say they actually have Jamaican food. Like you can go in the store and you can pick up a mango. You could see a milo ain seen a milo since I left, you know, a tin a Milo. So it was about community culture. I got to see that. That was 1975.

So my father came as a farm worker and he circled, he did farm work here. He did farm work in the

States. Um, yeah. And that's what, and he decided he liked Canada. Um, my mom came also as a domestic and they were here, um, I'd say seven years before they got official landed status. Cousins also, uh, cousins came up on the, uh, I'd say 75% of the women came up on, on the domestic scheme. At that time, lots of us, mom, dad, brother, lots of cousins and lots of extended family, so we had cousins that we called each other cousins, but our dad, mom and dad grew up together from Jamaica, so they came here. So we just kind of lived around the corner from each other, and that was. Yeah.

### **Trea-Jah-Isle Records: Slide 1**

#### ***Jay Douglas traces the roots of ska and its evolution into reggae in Jamaica and North America***

**Jay Douglas:** Ska, ska, ska! Here's the deal. The slaves came out of Africa. Some went to the Caribbean, some went to South America. Some went to the United States, Southern United States, Mississippi Delta worked the cotton field, but they created, they brought the music from Africa. Yeah. And then the blues in the southern cotton field. The blues. And it works its way up from the South to New Orleans, Chicago, all the way up to Motown. But there was one particular man from Memphis, Roscoe Gordon, and he grew up, in the studio where Elvis Presley started out, where Roscoe played piano, only black in there with that white group of musicians, and he would play the piano a certain way.

*"Surely, surely I'm in love, I'm in lo-ove.."*

The way he played that piano and that influence from Roscoe came into the Caribbean all the way into Montego Bay in Jamaica, where I'm from. So when I was a kid, we heard that Roscoe Gordon Blues, also another gentleman, Fats Domino from New Orleans.

*"Come on, baby man. Be my guest. Be my guest tonight as you jump, turn up."*

And that's how we got ska in Jamaica. Ska, ska, ska ska uh, Jamaica ska. They weren't very good,

great players, like the Americans when they heard the American blues, but they did what they could and they played the way they did. So we ended up getting ska in Jamaica. So as they played the ska because of other reasons, they slowed the ska beat down to in Jamaica, the musicians and the producers, they slowed the ska down to

*“doo, doo, doo.... Uh, girl I've got today, uh,”*

...Rock Steady then, and from that Rock Steady, there was a group in the United States called, the Staple Singers. You heard of them?

*“I know a place. Ain't nobody's fooling, come on and take me. I'll take you there.”*

So when they, The Staples singers, when they went to Jamaica for a concert, they heard the rock steady so they copied that, took it back to America and made a hit song with I'll take you there, then after they slowed the Rock Steady down to Reggae.

*“One love, One Heart, let's get together and feel alright.”* Bob Marley and the Wailers.

So you see, that's how Reggae came. But it all came from all the way from Africa into the stage.

Blues, not not being for the blues, we wouldn't have all that and the blues gave us Hip Hop, DanceHall, R&B, Motown, Jazz, Pop. But if I don't tell you this, you wouldn't know. So you see the connection.

## **Trea-Jah-Isle Records: Slide 2**

### ***Jay Douglas talks about his first experiences in the Little Jamaica neighbourhood***

**Jay Douglas:** My first memory of this particular strip came, started in the earlier mid-sixties. My mom came here as a domestic worker in the 1955, and she worked in the rich homes doing domestic work. Then I joined her and my uncle in 1964, and I was a, at the time when I joined there, here. She made it known to me that knowledge is power when it's used effectively. And she brought

me in for a purpose and she taught me how the system works and it was very important that I should acquire a good education. So then I became a student at Central Tech and it so happened that we grew up just down the road from here. I grew up in this, my first address was Christie Street, then Lauder, Ashbury, and well it was another street down Ashbury, Lauder and Roseneath. So I grew up in there. This was where all it is.

#### **Trea-Jah-Isle Records: Slide 4**

##### ***Shane Kenney tells the story of Trea-Jah-Isle's history in Little Jamaica.***

**Shane Kenney:** Okay, so I'm gonna, just to tell you the history of the place, so back in 1980, I wanna say in 1987, there was already a previous record store and I don't know the name of that store. But a famous artist, Canadian Jamaican artist named Nana McLean she actually bought the store from that person and then had it till 1995. And then that's where, another kind of famous Jamaican Canadian man named Natty B. he was on the radio 105.5, which is a community radio in York and he actually had a show called Zion Trade and he had that business 1995, till 2015. And then from there it's been owned by a person named Jah Chozen, who took it in 2015 and he's been running it ever since. And then I came in 2017. I partnered up with him. Yeah. Back in those days, they were the only, there's a few other record stores around the city, but this is one of them that would actually get the fresh music. So a lot of times back in the like eighties and nineties, they would drive to Buffalo every Thursday and by Friday morning they'll come back and there should be all the new music and that would have be the latest and hottest music coming out of Jamaica and other countries as well, but mainly Jamaica. And a lot of times what I hear that this place doesn't wasn't just about music, it was about the community. And one thing I say about the person, Natty B, he kind of brought everyone together to speak about different things.

And I think that's why people really love the people like to have the conversation and they can talk about anything if it's music, it's what's happening in Jamaica, what's happening in Canada, what's happening around the world. I think that's why a lot of people came to the store was that small community of, you know, being together and being open with one another. A lot of the times.

## **RAP'S Restaurant: Slide 2**

### ***Carole Rose tells the history of RAP'S Restaurant.***

**Carole Rose:** Okay, RAPS has been around since 1982 and he's been on Eglinton for the whole time, right, since 1982. And, how that came about was that my husband, Horace Rose, who is, who at the time was a record producer and he produces artists, reggae artists from Jamaica. So when they used to do shows, he also had a record store, so he had a record store, they used to do shows and at the end of the night, they had no place to, to go and eat. He was in England, London, England. And, he came up with this idea along with one of his, one of the guys that he was, producing, they came up with the idea of, they were in, I think it was Birmingham, and they had this show and the show was, it was, It was big and after the show they had no place to go in England to eat. And they were like, hungry apart from, I think it was McDonald's or whatever, and being reggae artists, they don't really fool much, fool around with, you know, those type of things. So, that's how Raps was birth. Just from that and he started out as just take out 24 hours people used to come from shows, parties, whatever and this used to be the stop where they come and sometimes, you know he used to have a record store downstairs and he sell records and artistes you name it, they've been here. Basketball players, they've been here, actors, actresses, they've been here. So this is a landmark for the different areas of professionalism so yeah, that's how it came.

### **RAP'S Restaurant: Slide 3**

#### ***Carole Rose's account of meeting her husband Horace Rose.***

**Carole Rose:** Oh, that's a funny ha-ha, that's a funny story. Well, I used to, okay, so I started out as a hairdresser. So I used to do hair, but I used to do hair in London, Ontario. And then, I got, after going through school and all of that, I found out I was allergic to the products that I was using, so my hands used to break out and things like that. So, you know, What the doctor said to me, if I need to keep my fingers, I gotta stop. You know what I was doing. I, you know, I stopped that and then moved to Toronto from London and then I was working, at the time, I was working at a bank, right? And I met Horace Rose, which is now my husband, so we, he came into the bank one day, to open up an account and at the time, I was there and, found out that he has a restaurant. And at the time I was looking for something, part-time to do on the weekends or, you know, after work. So I found out that he had a restaurant and I just ask him, if he's looking for help, and then one thing lead to another and married children.

Yeah. So, he found me, not, I found it, but he found me and, it, I mean it worked out.

### **Beauty Salons and Barber Shops: Slide 1**

#### ***D'Andra Montague's experience with haircare and beauty providers in Little Jamaica***

**D'Andra Montague:** It's always been a part of my experience growing up. I think my first time really going to a salon I do not remember the name of the salon, but it was by Caledonia and Eglinton, before the Scotia Bank was there, there was a salon. I think where there's a dispensary now. And I used to sit there with my mom all day, day in, day out. I used to also go to Theresa's which used to be closer to Keele and Eglinton I don't know what's there now. I think oh, I think they're still there. Actually I don't recall, but it's where it's in between where team tax man is, and I

think there's like a dispensary there now or something. So I used to go to Theresa's, used to go to Monica's with the lady that babysat me, which is now my grandmother, my honorary grandma. All the time, she and Monica would talk for an hour and a half, and I would just have to sit there and walk around and read the products and learn the products. There was a beauty supply as well, right next to like maybe two doors or one door down as well. That I used to frequent a lot, get my products at, with my grandma, with my mom, with my dad.

I used to frequent barbers of Eglinton with my dad as well, where he would get his shave and his cut and they would also just chat about everything and anything for hours on end. So that ended up being a part of my after school hangout spot too. All of these spaces just became a part of my routine and everything that I did. I had a lot of adopted fathers there, so whenever they would see me, they would take care of me, ask me if I had something to eat, give me money to eat food and whatnot.

### **Beauty Salons and Barber Shops: Slide 3**

***D'Andra Montaque talks about the importance of having beauty spaces in Little Jamaica.***

**D'Andra Montaque:** When I first started my business online, there was never a vision to have a physical location until way, way later. And if it was absolutely necessary, but now, learning more about my industry and understanding more about the experience of shopping for beauty products.

Nothing beats that in person experience when it comes to beauty, right? You wanna see it.

Everybody when it comes to beauty, wants to see beauty. So in order to see beauty, you need to have a space to be able to see it. The first thing I thought of when starting a physical location for my business was to be in little Jamaica because like I said, it's home to me and I would want my baby, my business to be in the place that I call home.



I also know that being in this area will give me the ability to service people of my diaspora and also be able to service all the barbershops and salons that are in this area. I don't know if there is documentation or stats on this, but I don't know if there's any other place in this city that has as much shops and salons as this area does. So there is many, so many. So for me that's, not only good business, but a great way to build relationships, which is what my business is all about. It's about community, right? And with little Jamaica not having a community space, I think, me opening a, beauty retail store, I can have the ability to create that community space because I don't wanna build it like how other beauty retail stores look or beauty supply, they realize. I'm not saying beauty supply cuz I don't wanna be a beauty supply. I wanna be a space where people can come to, they can stay. You're not here just to shop. You're not even here to shop all the time. You're just here to spend time with the people of your community and talk, catch up. Share laughs, share jokes, share bad news, share good news. Feel like you're not alone because this area does not have that. And it's incredible to say that in 2022 that this area doesn't have that because it's been such a huge community for so many people of so many nationalities for so long, you would think that that would be a priority.

#### **Beauty Salons and Barber Shops: Slide 4**

***How and why Roland Beggs began working in Little Jamaica and stayed for over two decades.***

**Roland Beggs:** 1992. I first came up to, um, Eglinton and Oakwood, I mean, Sorry, Eglinton and Vaughn and Oakwood area. I was there and if I go back into the how I started this, well, when I moved to Grenada I come up here in 1992, I was back home. Why I really leave from up there, I was working up there, but I was planning to go back to school because back home, I had a scholarship to go to Cuba because of Cuban Grenadian relationship back in the eighties. And then afterwards, I

came up here with all my documents thinking I what to do, come up here and go to school back and do civil engineering.

So my mom told me, come up with all the documents. When I came up here, I applied to George Brown and they told me I had to go back to school and start all over again, because Cuba is a socialist country, who is communist, and they didn't recognize the document. So I had a friend up there at a barbershop. I say, okay, meanwhile I start working there still thinking what I would've do in the future to go to school. And afterwards the city, city people just showed up, they said, and they ask the boss, do you have a license? Do you have a license? So I'm asking, do you have a license to do barbering? And they say, well, yes, you have to. So I was making a lot of money. So I said, you know what, let me just call up a school.

One guy I know, a friend Edwin gave the school, they call Topaz cosmetology. And I went up. So, Um, somewhere in Scarborough, Markham and I'm, when sign up for the school and then I say, okay, to do this properly, you have to have a license. So I say, I do my license, then I go to school. I do what? Nine months? I didn't get it right. Then I go back to, I do it another five months, which I fit into the cosmetology thing now, which I do women hair no barbering again. And from that I was so motivated by that and I have my license now. So I said, well, I could do things. So I went open my first business in 1996. And from since then, I'm on the floor right through because as when I came up here, it is like up there to me, like here was a most black area and every West Indian, African people, whatever, everybody's black here. And we almost all the groceries that we say we eat, we could get it here. And everybody come from Scarborough, Mississauga wherever they come on Eglinton because there is a lot of black area black stores here, so you could get the food that you want, you'll meet somebody that you want, that you want to see. You meet somebody that you know and everybody come to socialize. So that's why I say, okay, I'm more targeting the black people and here more black. It's a black area. So that's why I came open here. The business here. And then I had support from the black people. Ain't even think I was to go in the white area because oy, you know,

come a black area. Because when I came here, my uncle was telling me that back in the seventies, Bathurst and um, Bloor was the thing and then everybody come, I know a couple of barbers that lived down there and came up here now.

## **Randy's Take Out: Slide 2**

***Listen to D'Andra Montaque, Shane Kenney, and Adrian Hayles share their feelings on Randy's closing and its community impact.***

**D' Andra Montaque:** There's always so much people you're walking down the street and you're like, Excuse me, sorry, excuse me. Sorry. Cuz there's so much people. That's what I remember growing up. Randy's always had a line out the front door. Of course. You're lucky if you could not have to wait outside. Those were the good days. R I P to Randy's, of course, because that was definitely running in there from I was a child to get a patty with a dollar a loonie you know? So sad.

**Shane Keeley:** Even a place like Randy's, I don't know if you've ever been to Randy's, but Randy's patties they were Chinese, Jamaican, but they had that culture too, right? They brought the authentic patties that they've learned how to make in Jamaica and brought it down here. And they've been here for 40 years and them closing just, it made the community sad.

**Adrian Hayles:** Randy's still is a staple cuz it's been there forever and sadly it's no longer there. But again, this is why we're having these discussions is talking about hotspots and these cultural landmarks as they were and Randy was definitely one of them.

## **JN Money Services: Slide 1**

***Claude Thompson on JN Money Services' place in the community***

**Claude Thompson:** As I said, people leave, they're different from Jamaican in particular, we focus on, because that's our biggest market. Yeah. And they come here with the sole purpose of, for a better life. Right. Right. And in, in the pursuit of, of of, of that, they also recognize that they, their needs back home. Mm-hmm. . And so they, they welcome an organization like us that are there to connect them with their family and friends back home. Right. . So all businesses is pretty much, um, an integral part of the community.

## **JN Money Services: Slide 2**

***Claude Thompson discusses the importance of remittances to Jamaicans at home and abroad.***

**Claude Thompson:** You know, remittances, if you know anything about our country forms a very, uh, large portion of the foreign exchange and the, and the GDP of the country. And so, you know, without remittances right, sometimes many families would not get by, you know, comfortably and a and a day to day basis. So our company, based on the fact that we are positioned right across the you know, we are able to allow persons here to send money to just about every community that you can think of on the island.

## **Reggae Lane: Slide 3**

**Elaine Lloyd- Robinson:** Ghetto stories, the word ghetto, getting higher education to teach others. I grew up in several of the Toronto community housing, um, neighborhoods, um, under-resourced, under service. We know all of that. Everything from us was always operating from a place of lack. When I learned what those words, I decided that I, I, we can't, we won't allow them to teach us how to live like that. So I started programs in my community. There was a center that was right next door

to me. Nobody looked like me, was inside that center. So I went over there and I said, why doesn't anybody look like me inside here? What is it that you can do? So I shared what I could do. Then I started to bring them kids, teach them ways that they can uplift themselves.

So we had a little dance group, but the dance was more a way of getting us together. And from then I started to teach them their history. Do you know who so and so? No, they don't. Okay, so now you need to know. So I was pleased. And then they, they decided that they wanna help me to fund my program. So that started in the basement of my house, which was right next door, the center and I, everywhere I went, it was always those ghetto kids. Those ghetto kids, they would come in and just stroll little things at us, but never, nothing uplifting. So it was how do we teach them how to treat us, cuz that's what we do. So if we are powerful people and educated people, we can change that dynamic. But I had, it had to start with me, so that's what Ghetto Stories is all about and asking people to get comfortable telling their stories cuz there's somebody waiting for that story so they can heal. That's the redefining how we use and understand words and the power of words. And overcoming insurmountable odds. So you can tell your story, so you can get somebody else healed and uplifted, right?

So that's the impact. So that's what the foundation of Ghetto Stories is all about. Telling the powerful stories of individuals overcome insurmountable odds. Understanding that the ghetto is not a physical place, but a state of mind. So if I can change your mindset, then I can get you to where you need to.

That's the foundation.

**Reggae Lane: Slide 4**

**Adrian Hayles:** I was born here in Toronto lived in Guyana from the age of one to eight years. And at which point I returned, my father's a dj, was a dj. And so my connection to the community started an early age as we came there for records collecting music for various gigs and for parties and such.

My first memory of Little Jamaica was actually at the corner of Vaughn and Oakwood. It was such a notorious neighborhood in the nineties. Lots of activity there, but my mom's best friend and somewhat of a godmother to me. I would spend weekends there with her. Hearing about it on the news from Oshawa where I lived at the time. But spending time there with my my aunt, my mom's best friend. We call 'em aunts, as you probably know, from the Caribbean and that was my first memories being there on summer weekends.

We were living at Bellamy and Eglinton neighborhood there and so we would take the transit in, to visit later on when I was a bit older and my father would drive down from Oshawa where I was living at in my teens again, to come down and get records from the local shops along Eglinton and Oakwood.

So the history of the Oakwood and Vaughn itself, as anybody would know, just had a lot of gang activity. I separate that from my times of course, further north at Eglinton where we would just go there for the music. Nana McLean is a prominent member of that community and I remember her record specifically. In fact when I painted the the reggae Lane mural I used the album cover that I had my own personal album cover of her first album.

Josh Colle, who was the counselor at the time. He spearheaded the project along with STEPS initiative who got the funding and got the project on their way but we did an extensive community engagement consultation where members of the community were the ones that selected the artists that were gonna be featured due to their importance and their contributions to both the Reggae history in Canada and Toronto as a whole, but specifically to the community itself. Most of the members that were featured on the mural were very local. They would come by as I was actually

painting their murals and give me suggestions, and I was able to talk to them about their times with Studio One talking about the music that they produced. Most of the times I would be playing their music like I do with a lot of my mural projects of this nature. It just feels like the energy of the artist is actually with us when we're playing their music whilst there painting. There's a certain residency there that I appreciate.