



**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**
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RACIAL INJUSTICE

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My heritage is Jamaican and Chinese, which is Black and Asian, or in short 'Blasian.' My family moved to Canada from California. I grew up in an Italian neighborhood where I was one of the few non-Italian kids. I had to learn to fight because I was picked on by boys in the neighbourhood. I experienced racism in almost everything I did then because of my ethnic background. I did not speak Italian and they would talk about me and make fun of me, even though I didn't know what they were saying. All you want as a kid is to fit in and to be accepted. I tried my best to fit in, but ignorance is a wicked thing to fight against, especially, when there is no one to back you up.

These challenges made me determined to help others, particularly children who are impacted by bullying. It inspired me to retrofit a trailer so volunteer medical staff could have a mobile unit to perform reconstructive cleft and palate surgeries for children. This retrofitted trailer is now used in the Dominican Republic by Operation Smile.

I volunteer for various community initiatives, because I believe we benefit greatly from being union members and having unionized jobs. We have to find our own ways to reach out to people who need help. There is so much good each of us can do. We have to focus on what we are passionate about, research organizations that are a good fit for what we want to help with and see how we can help.

Joining the TTC brought me to a different phase in my life. A few friends, who worked for TTC, encouraged me to apply. At first, my father, who worked at the TTC, didn't know I got hired, until I surprised him with the news. Fortunately, I did not really experience any racism when I started at the TTC. I did see some racism toward the LGBTQ employees, but that passed when TTC and ATU Local 113 took a stand against it. The TTC has put in place severe penalties, such as suspension or termination, for racism in the workplace.

When we look back at the history of Black people, there are so many things that come to mind. What stands out most to me – are the people of the Black community who have contributed greatly to every sphere of our lives. Charles S. L. Baker, the inventor of the radiator. Madam C. J. Walker, the inventor of hair products for women. Nathan 'Nearest' Green, the master distiller, who taught Jack Daniels how to make whiskey. And so many more. Their stories should be known – yet very few know of them.

I feel strongly about this because I look at my own family history which has been intertwined with entrepreneurs and gifted musicians. My grandfather, Hedley Jones, was a well-known Jamaican musician, audio engineer, inventor, trade unionist and writer. My father, Donald Anthony Jones, also a musician, is an ATU 113 member for over 50 years now. Before joining the TTC, he was a well-regarded Jamaican musician, involved in the pioneering days of Ska music – Jamaica's indigenous pop style.

I would like the truth to be brought out about what Blacks have contributed to the world and the innovation that they brought forth – but was stolen from them because they did not know about copyright or patents for an invention.

I encourage young Black people to educate yourself – dream of things that you think could be useful, but do not exist yet. Or how to improve something that exists, to make it better. Educate yourself to be compatible with new innovations, with the future in mind. Have imagination for the next century. The sky is the limit for you. Be limitless.

We can not undo the past, it is written already. But we can write the future through dreams, ambitious thoughts, constructive planning with action. Let us rise back up and let us use our minds – not fists or weapons. Pick up the pen. Freedom of the mind will let us rise. Be brave. Be bold. Be confident.

