

**Spoken Word Poet for the:**  
**Era 21 Networking Breakfast for Young Canadians**  
**Ms. Jenna Tenn-Yuk**  
**Parliamentary Restaurant, Parliament Hill, Ottawa**  
**May 3, 2012**

**Everyone Loves A Jamasian Girl**

*by Jenna Tenn-Yuk*

Everyone loves a Jamasian girl  
Is pretty much the most awesome mix in the world  
Jamasian, a fusion of Jamaican and Asian, Chinese you see  
Which is pretty sweet, cause you get some spicy roti and patties and curry goat and rice  
and peas  
And then throw in some Chinese, with sticky rice and har gow and char siu bao.

And it's not just the flavour of food I savour  
But the island sounds and soul I grew up hearing  
Wearing my dad's rasta belts and hats  
Listening and dancing to beats and skats  
Like Peter Tosh and Barrington Levy and Jimmy Cliff and Bob Marley.

*"One love, one heart, let's get together and feel all right."*

And we'd feel all right celebrating Chinese New Year without a care  
Receiving red envelopes, enveloping money  
A sign of good luck for the year to come  
But sometimes I feel like my luck has run out  
As I doubt who I really am.

I am Chinese  
I am Jamaican  
I am Chinese Jamaican  
I am Chimaican  
I am Jamasian  
I am Canadian?

I am confused like Confucius  
Collecting and contemplating my thoughts  
Okay, so I look Chinese except I'm darker and my nose isn't as flat and I have fuller lips  
But I don't really fit in or understand them

Am I a fAsian?  
A fake Asian wanting to be in with those who speak Mandarin  
But I don't speak Mandarin or Cantonese or any of these

Not getting any of the cultural jokes because my culture is more Jamaican  
Where my parents grew up in Little London and Kingston  
And yes, my parents have Jamaican accents  
No way!  
Way!  
You don't say.  
Ya, I just said that.  
Look, my dad's basically a China man who sounds black  
It's really not that whack  
And when I tell people my parents are Jamaican, they think that's so cool  
But it's hard when you're not sure if you can identify with these roots  
Asking who Norman Manley and Marcus Garvey are  
Who are far from the ones I grew up hearing, like Sir John A. Macdonald  
Bumbaclot  
I knew I was missing something in those history classes.

So I'm not black enough for the Jamaicans  
And not yellow enough for the Asians  
So where do I even fit in?  
This Miss Chin wondering if she's more Canadian than Chinese and Jamaican  
And what does being Canadian even mean?  
Does it mean hockey?  
Cause I played that.  
Peacekeeping?  
I like peace [peace sign].  
How Asian of me  
And I could stand up here getting nowhere  
Debating what is Canadian.

D'accord, c'est dommage.  
D'oh! So Homer Simpson of me  
Please excuse me, I'm just trying to figure out my identity  
Identifying with Jamaicans so people think I'm amazing  
Or with Chinese people so I can make fun of Asians  
But really mocking myself because now I'm the token Asian in a lot of groups  
Even though I'm clearly not the best representative of that crew  
But maybe I'm not just exploiting my cultures, but myself  
Selfishly caring what you think of me as I keep talking and telling myself  
Everyone loves a JamAsian girl.

## **The Global Power of Young Canadians**

*by Jenna Tenn-Yuk*

I am a thinker and I constantly reflect and wonder  
Who am I? What is my purpose? What are my passions?  
And what kind of legacy will I leave?  
Where I'm constantly dreaming about change  
And making a difference in people's lives  
Wondering why I'm here.  
Then I see people like Rathika, Phil and Jeff  
Realizing the opportunities and possibilities withing my reach  
Within your reach, within our reach  
That it's possible to pursue our dreams.

We are privileged to grow up in a nation that values diversity  
Celebrating our differences, which enriches our experiences  
Accepting and valuing the uniqueness that each one of us brings and represents  
With the importance of sharing in each others' cultures as global citizens  
Open to learning, at ease with differences.  
As Canadians, we're learning to negotiate cultural, racial and linguistic boundaries  
And our various identities  
Being in a space and place where diveristy is celebrated, valued and admired  
And our differences breeds opportunities in a variety of capacities  
And today, we have been inspired by these three speakers.

At the age of seven, Rathika wasted no time  
Making a difference at the grassroots level  
As a volunteer and community organizer desiring social justice  
Leading her to eventually run for parliament  
Because she saw that the house did not reflect many marginalized women.  
Even though she thought she was too young  
The late Jack Layton convinced her to run  
And she became the first Tamil Canadian to be elected to parliament  
Valuing the importance of youth engagement in politics  
Where you can fight for change and stand against injustice  
And be aware of what's happening in your communities and country.

Which links to Jeff's talk about the importance of education and awareness  
That we cannot walk through life without learning and understanding the history of this  
country And where we come from  
That we are standing on traditional Algonquin territory.  
We need to revist the history-treaty relationship  
And get back to a full partnership between Canadians and Aboriginal Peoples  
Trying to understand why  
There are more than five hundred missing and murdered Aboriginal women across the  
country

Fifty communities without schools  
Suicide rates are six to ten times higher than the Canadian average  
And nearly half of First Nations water systems are considered high risk.  
These are just a few statistics that show  
We cannot turn a blind eye to what's happening in our own backyard.

Phil discussed the importance of learning  
Learning about the world around you  
Learning about life, learning about yourself  
Being on a continuous journey of self-improvement  
For personal growth and career development  
Seeking not to improve yourself one hundred per cent in one day  
But one per cent for one hundred days, keeping your pride at bay  
Taking those little steps that will help you reach your dreams and goals  
By not underestimating the power that you have to make a difference.

As a leader, you must continually grow  
And develop a strong body, mind and spirit to lead and succeed  
Embracing your uniqueness, not wanting to be the same as the rest  
Bringing all the pieces of yourself to the table  
Realizing how much you are able to do  
Cherishing the fact that you have the power to make choices  
And the ability to voice your desires and dreams  
Celebrating our Canadian diversity.

And I ask you  
What will your legacy be? What are your passions and dreams?  
My friend once said, "You are the legacy that lets others be free."  
Me? You?  
I argue, that even if it's for one person  
Then it's worth speaking and fighting for  
Bringing change to the injustices in the world simply by using your voice  
Learning about past histories and telling stories and not being afraid of your fears  
Standing up for what you believe in  
Dreaming that you can be the change you wish to see in the world  
With your unique voices, passions and stories.  
Look at the legacies of Phil, Jeff and Rathika  
Which started with their passions, dreams and unique stories.

You are the leaders of tomorrow, the leaders of today  
With great power to make a huge difference  
In your families, communities, influencing policies  
And making the world a better place.  
So do not underestimate your ability to make change because you can and you will  
And let's dream on a big scale, but also on a little one too  
That if you can free and make change for even one person

Then it's worth doing.

Let's continue to value our diversity and the uniqueness each one of us brings

Because transformation is coming and it starts with you.