

Toronto is home to many languages, customs, traditions, and communities that have come together to create the unique melting pot of identities that the city is known for. While *From Here* is centered around the contributions of Caribbean culture to the city's identity, it also acknowledges that the city would not be what it is today without the contributions of the many other cultures that call it home. From Chinatown to Little India, and everywhere in between, distinct cultural communities are the foundation of the city and will continue to support Toronto's growth *From Here*.

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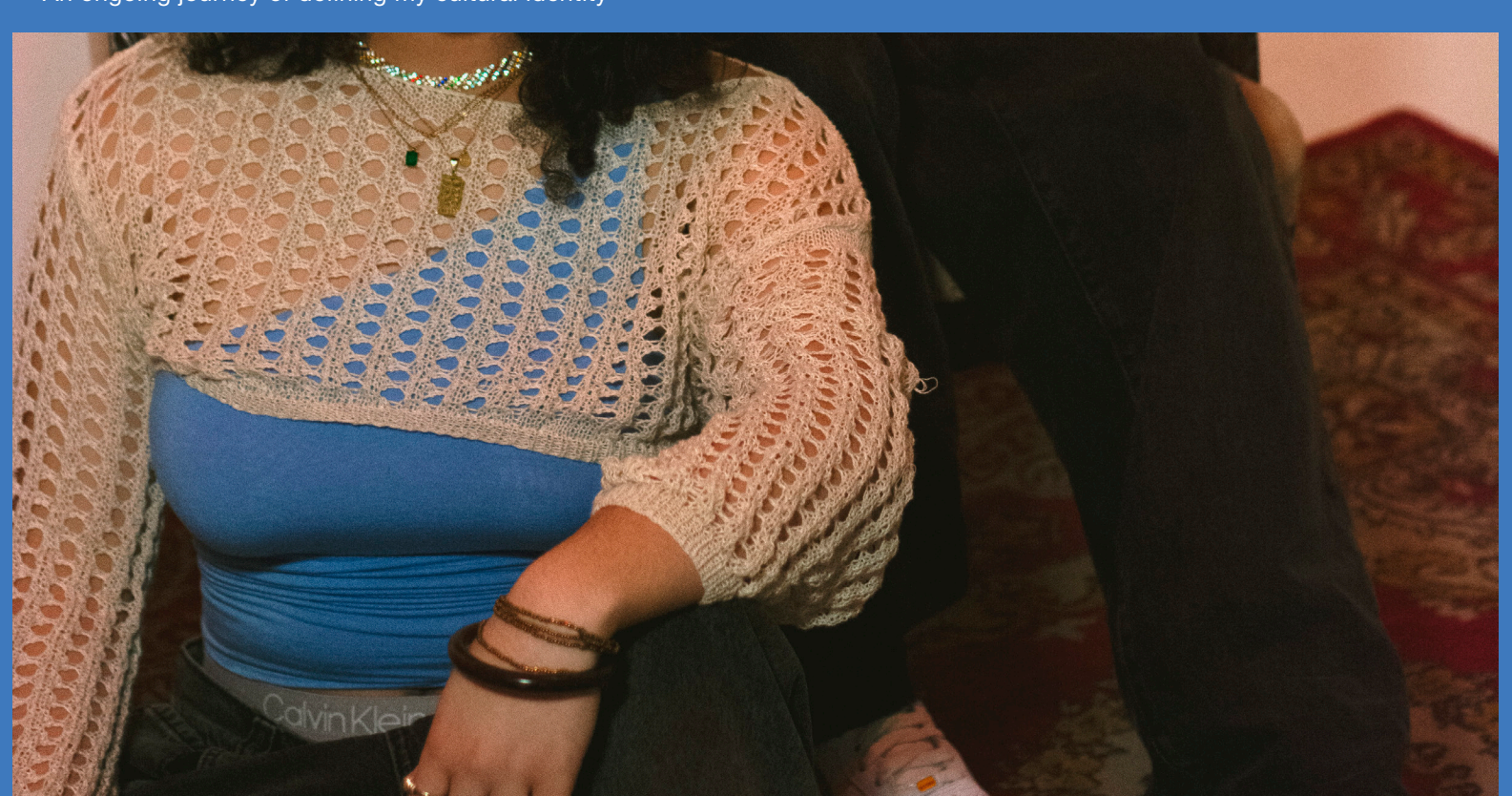
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READ

CULTURAL APPRECIATION -

THIS REFERS TO THE GENUINE UNDERSTANDING, RESPECT, AND ADMIRATION FOR ELEMENTS OF

ANOTHER CULTURE

AN EFFORT TO LEARN

HONOR THE CULTURE

AND HISTORY OF THEM

AND CAN PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING

AND TOLERANCE AMONG

CULTURAL APPRECIATION

This refers to the genuine understanding, respect, and admiration for elements of another culture. It involves an effort to not only learn about, but also to honour the cultural significance and history of those elements. It can promote understanding and tolerance among different cultural groups.

Cultural appreciation engages with another culture in a respectful and informed manner. It acknowledges the value and contributions of that culture. It often includes cross-cultural learning experiences, such as attending cultural events, participating in cultural practices with permission, or engaging in educational activities. It fosters a sense of unity and shared humanity while recognizing and respecting cultural diversity.

Cultural appropriation harms marginalized communities by perpetuating stereotypes or commodifying their culture. On the other hand, cultural appreciation seeks to empower and uplift these communities by recognizing their contributions.

CULTURAL GROUPS.

OF ELEMENTS FROM

OR GROUPS FROM

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CULTURAL APPROPRIATION -

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Cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation are terms used to describe how individuals or groups from one culture interact with elements from another culture. Both involve engaging with elements from other cultures and recognize the importance of knowledge and respect for the cultural significance of these elements. These concepts both have an impact and often intersect, but result in different implications.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

This refers to the adoption of elements from one culture by individuals or groups from another culture without permission of use or understanding. It occurs without respect for the cultural significance or history of the elements being borrowed, and it can trivialize or commodify those elements. Cultural appropriation can lead to the erasure of the original culture's contributions, reinforce stereotypes, and cause harm or offense to the group whose culture is being appropriated. Cultural appropriation typically involves a power imbalance, and can reinforce existing inequalities and perpetuate stereotypes.

ROOM

Cultural appropriation vs cultural appreciation

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL MEDIA AND JAMAICAN CULTURE

Cultural appropriation has long been par for the course with social media, but given the exploding popularity of TikTok as a platform that allows users to showcase various aspects of cultures through music and dance, this frowned upon practice might be running rampant.

Among the casualties? Jamaican culture.

Professor and Socio-Cultural Analyst in the Institute of Caribbean Studies at the University of the West Indies, Donna P. Hope said that while TikTok promotes visibility for Jamaican culture, more so music and dance on a global stage, there is a thin line between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation.

“Where Jamaican culture is concerned, and we’re talking about dancehall dance, I find that there is a thin line between cultural appropriation and appreciation, especially when you look at the kind of power dynamics and the kind of privileges that some groups have over... Jamaicans and Jamaican dancers,” Hope said.

Hope explained that overseas-based entertainers often utilize aspects of Jamaican culture out of genuine love for the island’s art forms, and even provide opportunities for locals. However, they are better able to transform and monetise the product because of greater resources and existing imbalances.

“Because I work with a lot of the Europeans and foreigners, and in a lot of ways when you speak with people directly, their intention is

not to take from the culture, because many of them do everything possible to give back to the culture, to give to the people here, to form connections with dancers here and make opportunities available to them,” she said.

The Jamaican accent is one such element that has often been imitated on TikTok. Social media influencer Chet Hanks is popularly known for speaking in the Jamaican dialect, with his videos accumulating hundreds of thousands of likes on the profiles they are shared on. And, with dance routines often being accompanied by music, catchy songs from the dancehall such as ‘Throat’ by Gage and ‘Bend Over’ by RDX have been revived on the platform where they are being used by users from across the world to rack up millions of views and likes. Despite the good intention of many foreign users of Jamaican culture, Hope said there is an element of appropriation due to the said imbalances.

“It will always be imbalanced and because of that, there is a kind of sliding cultural appreciation with some appropriation because those people [foreigners] are better able to transform the dance in the streets into products that can be monetised. And when they are monetised, they aren’t named Jamaican, they are named under the banner of these individuals,” Hope said.

TikTok, which has accumulated over one billion monthly active users since its launch in September 2016, states that music and sound are the platform’s universal language and they play an integral role in the community’s creativity, liveliness and cultural impact. Hope urges Jamaicans to have a presence on the platform to generate and maintain visibility, and promote their cultural product on a larger scale.

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THAT COULD NEVER BE ME!

You may be participating in cultural appropriation rather than appreciation. Before you say “that could never be me!” ask yourself the following questions

1 **To What Ethnic/Racial/Cultural Group Does the Practice or Artifact Belong?**
Yes this means doing research!

2 **How Is the Group that the Practice or Artifact Belongs to Oppressed?**
Take that research a step further and even try talking with members of the group that the practice or artifact belongs to.

3 **Do You Benefit from Doing This? How?**
Your reason for wanting to engage with the practice or artifact should go beyond being trendy or cool.

4 **Why Might It Make Someone Uncomfortable?**
A little empathy is necessary here. If you have the smallest inkling that someone could take this the wrong way, you should probably avoid doing it.

5 **What Makes It Possible for You to Engage with this Practice, Tradition, or Material?**
If you bought something from Urban Outfitters or Shein, chances are it’s your economic or social privilege allowing you to engage with this practice or artifact, and that, my friend, is cultural appropriation.



KENSINGTON MARKET

FOOD

Top five must try Caribbean food spots

Kensington Market is one of Toronto's most historically rich neighbourhoods, vibrant with multiculturalism from years of housing immigrant families and businesses, among which includes Caribbean immigrants. Today, Caribbean culture continues to influence Kensington Market. Take a tour of some of the best food spots in the neighbourhood!

VEGGIE D'LIGHT



Caribbean food
made with heart,

soul,
and sustainability



Veggie D'Light storefront, located at 160 Baldwin St.



Veggie D'Light sandwich board sign.



Veggie D'Light seating area.

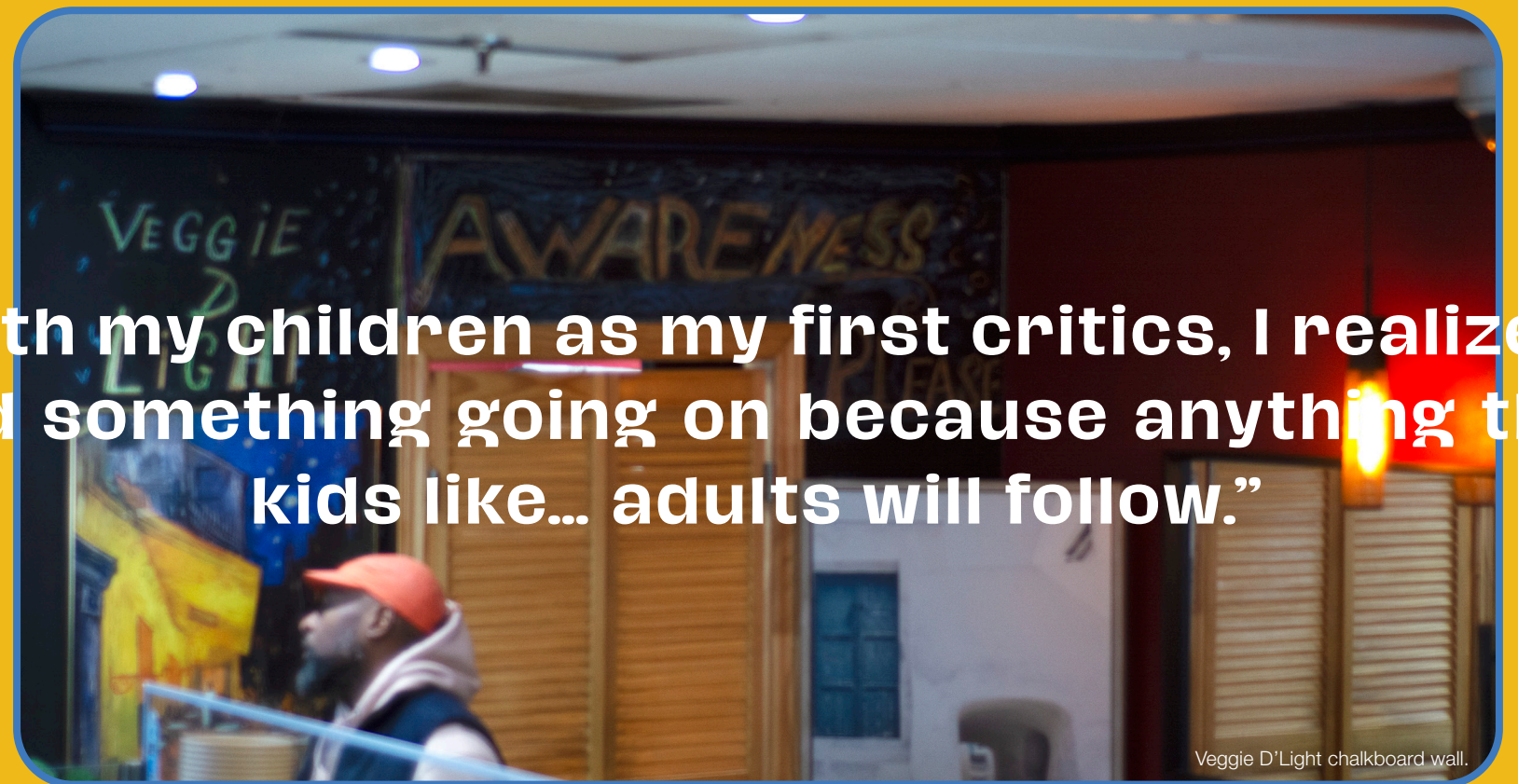
Veggie D'Light kitchen.



Chef Peter McKenzie grew up in Jamaica where he was raised in a large family. Living in a household full of kids with a busy mother, McKenzie had to be independent and resourceful, leading him to learn to prepare meals on his own and developing his passion for cooking. Fast forward to McKenzie's adult life and move to Canada, he didn't lose touch with his roots. In fact he used them to develop the concept of "Veggie D'Light," an entirely vegan, Caribbean restaurant and catering business located in Toronto.

It all started with his children. As a father, McKenzie would prepare meals for his children's school lunches and was approached by one of the staff members to cater a meal for a school event.

"With my children as my first critics, I realized I had something going on because anything that kids like... adults will follow."



Veggie D'Light chalkboard wall.

The praise he received encouraged McKenzie to pursue restaurant ownership and approach cooking on a larger scale. In becoming "Chef Peter," and opening the doors to Veggie D'Light in 2015, McKenzie has worked hard to create a menu that maintains Caribbean authenticity, while also simultaneously putting a health conscious and sustainable spin on traditional meals. He does so mainly through his spices, taking spice blends used in traditional Caribbean jerk recipes for meat, and using them to season vegetable based dishes. McKenzie believes that as long as the food is seasoned with soul, people don't notice too much of a difference between his plant-based dishes and traditional Caribbean meats!

Overall, Chef Peter's mission is to provide "peace within, though food." The vegan menu at Veggie D'Light embraces both authentic Caribbean flavour and nutritional fortification for the body.



Veggie D'Light wall art.



His food is welcoming to all, providing barrier-free access to Caribbean cuisine and a sustainable lifestyle for the masses.

The “Toronto accent” has gained popularity online due to its distinct sound made up of slang terms used by members of the city. Much of these slang terms originate from Jamaican Patois, blending together with terms from other cultures and a Canadian accent to form a dialect that is unique to Toronto.



Do you know Toronto slang?

ah lie/ ahlie

INTERJECTION/ EXCLAMATION
 direct translation: Right?; Usually used at the end of the sentence in agreement with another person in conversation, or to express disbelief. E.g., “She is so pretty, ahlie?”

man dem

NOUN
 the boys/friends/guys, can be used to reference strangers or people known to the user. E.g., “I’m linking up with the man dem at Square One later.”

from

PHRASE
 for a long time; from way back when. E.g., “I’ve been going to this restaurant from time.”

time

GREETING/ VERB
 what’s up; to check out. E.g., “Y Pree dawg! Are you going out later?”

y pree

NOUN
 a joke; something not to be taken seriously. Source: Jamaican Patois. E.g., “It’s just a prank, joke ting.”

joke ting

bumbo-clot/ bumba-clot/ bumba-clart

INTERJECTION
 direct translation: bum cloth; a cloth used to wipe one’s behind; an explicit interjection used to express surprise or anger; can also be an insult or an intensifier. E.g., “Bumbaclot! Why are there still dishes in the sink after I told you to clean up!”

nize it/ nize your

beak

EXPRESSION
 shut up or be quiet; stop talking. “Nize” is Patois for noise. E.g., “Nize it, I don’t want to hear you speak no more.”

PRONOUN
 direct translation: waste youth. Good for nothing/stupid (young) person; insult. E.g., “Her new man is a waste yute.”

bredrin/ breth-ren

PRONOUN
 direct translation: brother; good friend, homie. Source: E.g., “My brethren would never switch on me.”

waste yute/wasteyute

wah gwan/ wag-wan

GREETING/ INTERJECTION
 What’s going on?/What’s up?/How are you? E.g., “Wagwan bredrin?”

NOUN
 direct translation: thing; significant other, an attractive/pretty woman; can also be used to refer to an attractive man or person. E.g., “My ex ting keeps calling tryna get back with me.”

ting

bare

ADJECTIVE
 “There were many, a lot. e.g., “There were bare people at Caribana this year!”



How Gen Z Caribbean-Canadians express their island roots through fashion

YOU FLA G



YOU FLA G





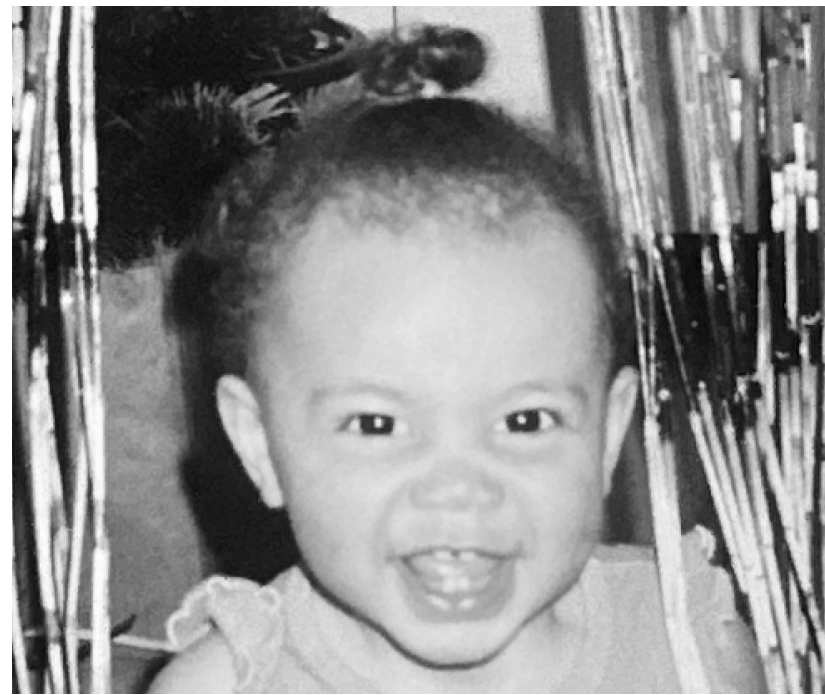




Ciara Rahming
Hailey Wickham
Quinlan Chong
FEATURED MODELS



DIGGIN FOR



My cultural identity has been an ever growing concept that in my 21 years of life, I have still yet to fully figure out. Born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I would say I grew up in a pretty culturally diverse environment. I was surrounded by other families of colour and white families alike, all of whom I felt were kind and accepting of me. Despite the diversity that did exist, I will say there were not many other Caribbean families in my neighbourhood. In fact, out of all the kids I went to school with (keep in mind that my middle school graduating class was only about 40 students), I can only name one other who was of Caribbean heritage. Outside of the meals served on special occasions at my grandparents house, I didn't really have any points of contact with my heritage. This caused me to grow up disconnected from who I was culturally and to try and blend in with the other non-white cultures around me, simply because the members of those cultures matched my skin tone and I wanted to feel a sense of community. As I got older, I started to learn more about my Caribbean heritage. Finally being exposed to other members of my cultural community has allowed me to form a connection with my heritage that I previously didn't know was possible.

G ROOTS

An ongoing journey
of defining my cultural identity.

By Tysa Laidlow



I'm a third generation immigrant,

meaning that it was my grandparents who took the brave step of packing up their lives and settling down in a new country. My grandma came from Barbados and my late granddad—who strategically chose that name over grandpa as a tactic to keep him sounding young—was from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I myself have never been to either of those countries, and as a kid, I didn't even understand where they were located. I want to blame my ignorance on my family for not properly explaining my heritage to me, but in hindsight many attempts to introduce bits and pieces of Caribbean culture to my siblings and I were made, I just didn't pick up on them until much later in life. For example, our holiday celebrations always consisted of large spreads of traditional Caribbean foods, such as curried goat, stewed fish, plantains, and my personal favorite, rice and peas. Of course, being the naive child I was, I just thought these dishes were my grandma's own made-up recipes; it never crossed my mind that anyone else had access to these delicacies. When relatives from the Caribbean would call to check in and my grandma would hand me the phone, the conversation would consist of nothing more than me answering the basic questions of "how are you?" "how is school?" and "did you get what you wanted for christmas?" I regret not making a stronger effort to connect with my family back in the Caribbean and ask questions about what life was like for them over there, especially since today I don't have the same luxury of getting their phone calls.



The disconnect between me and my Caribbean heritage grew stronger when I moved to Edmonton with my mom and younger brother for high school. I was now away from my Caribbean side of the family and living in a city where diversity felt much less prominent. Seeing as this move happened in my early teenage years, a very defining age, I certainly feel that it created cracks in the foundation of my cultural identity. I think I was finally at an age where my naivety was fading and I was starting to understand that certain interests of mine, such as food and music, were actually linked to my cultural identity, not just one-off things. However, in having my main source of Caribbean culture, being my grandparents, nearly removed from my life, my cultural identity continued to function in the background of who I considered myself to be. When I moved to Toronto for university, I finally reached a turning point. I suddenly went from hardly knowing anyone of Caribbean heritage to interacting with Caribbean culture on the daily, as it is so embedded in the city. I began to meet people of Caribbean heritage, some of whom were like me and felt disconnected from it, wanting to learn more. I am grateful for those who had a strong sense of pride in their cultural identity and were willing to teach. Seeing the culture so alive and prominent, and seeing people who were proud of their heritage made me realize that I wanted to be able to connect with my roots in a similar way and discover what being Caribbean meant to me.



Today, I am still in the ongoing process of getting to know more about my heritage. Living in Toronto for the past three and half years has taught me that everyone's connection to their culture is different, and I'm beginning to realize that there really is no right or wrong way to express cultural identity. For me, one of the main ways I work to repair the severed connection I had with my cultural identity is to explore it through multiple facets through the projects I work on. Whether it be an essay, a photography shoot or a campaign strategy, I'm constantly considering how I can turn my work into an opportunity to learn about my heritage and the role it plays in my life — this entire book is exactly that. Furthermore, the people I surround myself with have become intentionally chosen. While I would never force a friendship, I do make a conscious effort to connect with other members of the Caribbean community in hopes that I can learn how they choose to express themselves in regards to their cultural identity, and find out what resonates with me.

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Although it took me years to recognize and understand my Caribbean identity, I have come to realize that our roots are a permanent part of who we are, regardless of when we choose to engage with them or how we express them. My connection to my heritage may not look traditional, but it is intentional and continuously developing. I'm proud of myself for how far I've come, going from not even knowing where the Caribbean is as a child to dedicating an entire book to Caribbean culture today; I have truly grown so much. I have the city of Toronto to thank, for it has shown me that cultural identity does not follow a single path, and that reconnecting with heritage can happen through everyday choices, such as the relationships I choose to build and the work I create. This essay, and this book as a whole, reflects my belief that appreciating and staying connected to our roots does not require perfection, but rather awareness and a willingness to keep learning, and nothing excites me more than to see how my cultural roots continue to grow from here.

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