

**The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project**

An Oral History with Jitu Tanna

Archives and Research Collections

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Narrator: Jitu Tanna  
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**Abstract:**

Jitu Tanna was born in Kaliro Uganda along with his seven siblings. He attended a grade school in Kaliro until his family moved to Jinja when he was in grade 7. In 1971 Jitu's family was planning to move to the UK since he had been accepted to an undergraduate program in England. While the family was making plans to move to the UK the expulsion decree was announced and they were forced to speed up their plans to move to the UK.

Jitu and his family ended up in a transit camp in Sussex as the British government had converted several army barracks into temporary accommodations for Ugandan Asians. Eventually they were permanently resettled in Southhampton in London and Jitu worked for an insurance company for ten years in the UK before moving to Canada in 1982 to be with his wife.

He secured a position at the Royal Bank after working several odd jobs for a year when he first came to Canada. Since then he has been happily employed at the Royal Bank for over thirty years. He remains active in the Uganda Association in Toronto and was one of the lead volunteers during their celebrations marking the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Ugandan Independence in 2012.

This oral history was conducted at a Jitu's home in Toronto, Ontario.

**Shezan Muhammedi: “So this is an oral history on May 9<sup>th</sup>, and yeah I’ll let you go ahead and get started with your upbringing in Uganda.”**

Jitu Tanna: “Yeah so I was one of eight children in Uganda and I was born in a small town called Kaliro which is in the Busago district. And so did my schooling there in Kaliro and it was like going into grade seven and then I moved on to the second largest city in Uganda, Jinja and I continued my schooling there until about 1970... almost about 1971. And when Idi Amin came to power in 1971 and I think it was... I had decided at that time, and my parents had decided that I should do further education, for better education try and study in England. So I had applied and gotten admission in the UK and they were just in the middle of making plans to move to the UK anyways and this thing with Idi Amin broke out and it changed everything. I guess we had to quickly... in the beginning nobody... we didn’t think that he was serious and it seemed like you know it was just one of those things people thought he would change his mind or he was just joking, or... because he used to do that.

Yeah, so nobody took it seriously in the beginning, but as days wore on throughout the deadline people realized he was not... this was serious. So... and he had said you won’t be able to take anything with you so either it was a matter of selling everything or if you had money in the bank because most of the banks they were British banks then at least your money is there and in the future there’s a chance that you’ll get that back, right? Because if you have stuff lying around and you’re just going to sit there somebody’s going to take it. So frantically trying to sort of... whatever we could send off in little parcels, we would start doing that right away.

After about the middle of the time, maybe a month and a half before the deadline we realized you know that this is serious and we started making plans. We started selling stuff that were in the shops, furniture, everything, started putting money in the bank and then yeah, when the day came... in fact we left, I think the deadline was the ninth of November and we left just a day before the deadline. That’s how close it was, because I think my father was always thinking that no, no, this can’t be happening, I think he will change his mind. I think it was just... wishful thinking.

So yeah, even on the day we were leaving for the airport, even along the way there were checkpoints because they wanted to make sure you’re not taking jewelry and gold and stuff like that with you. So they would search you, like a body search done on the way in and everyone at the airport as well. Whatever they could find, they could just grab it. It was very trying circumstances and yeah so once we were on the plane we said, “Okay, we’re safe.” And I think at that point we had no idea what was going on in Uganda with Idi Amin and there were a number of people who were being slaughtered, the Africans. We had no idea at all, we just thought we were leaving behind a beautiful life, a beautiful country and hopefully something will happen to him or he’ll change his mind, and maybe we will come back. We realized Uganda had suffered because of this and he will say, “Okay, well I made a mistake,” and we’d come back. Everyone was hopeful of that. So yeah, we ended up in England.”

**Shezan: “Were your parents born in Uganda as well.”**

Jay: “No, they were born in India. They came to Africa a long, long, time ago. My father was only about... I think eighteen years old when he came to Uganda, and those were very difficult times as well because

there was nothing there in terms of living conditions, it was pretty rough. Gradually they made a better life for themselves and then my father got... went back to India and got married and then the family started. So yeah my mother and father were both born in India. Anyways we ended up in the UK on a cold November night.”

[Interruption]

Jay: “Anyway for me because I knew that I was... I had the right to stay there, you know? I would have been allowed to stay there which made it even more difficult to accept our conditions in the UK. Yes, granted the British government did everything they could to make us comfortable but we were living in... we went to a camp in Sussex. So we were there and you know, there were a lot of people there right and they were army barracks and they had made it into a transit camp, very comfortable providing us the three meals a day and helping us trying to find jobs locally in that area and then until we decide. Obviously they were trying to resettle as many people as they could as quickly as they could, right? So they said well, how about Scotland? And it didn’t matter to us where we went, right? But then my sister in law’s brother was in London because he was from Kenya and so he had been there, he was studying there. So he came to visit us and he says, “No, no, no, you’re not going to Scotland, it’s so cold there. You think this is cold?” In Scotland it’s even worse than in England, right? We told them we don’t want to go to Scotland, we want to remain in Southern England. So through some relatives we ended up in the city of Southampton in London, England and that’s where I spent ten years looking for obviously, there was no question of me continuing studies because the whole idea was as many people that can work, should work. We are at the working age so I got a job and did that for ten years.”

**Shezan: “What was your job?”**

Jay: “I was working for an insurance company. I wasn’t a life underwriter, it was just an office job. So yeah, I did that and slowly adopted to the British way of life and yeah I think even during that time... there was no, we weren’t happy to be there, right? Yes we were safe and all that but still in the back of our minds we always thought that this is just temporary and we’d be going back, it’s just a matter of time. I think as years went by we realized that Idi Amin isn’t going anywhere and nobody... people forgot about it and people were getting on with their lives. I don’t think... even the Western governments that knew what was going on there, they weren’t really... they said, “Well it’s their issue, their problem, we’re not going to interfere with that,” right? I think countries knew, America knew what was going on and they could have easily done something about it but it didn’t... I guess they just said, “Leave it as it is, we’re not going to interfere in this country’s internal affairs.”

Yeah, so years just went by and slowly I think a lot of people we knew back there were struggling back in Uganda, actually said no what happened was good, we made a life for ourselves in England which we wouldn’t have been able to do if we were struggling. There are people for whom this happened for better, they improved the quality of their lives and their children’s lives. I guess it took a few years for us to sort of adjust to the British way of life and then I guess slowly over time we realized that we aren’t going back to Uganda. This is... we are here and we’re here to stay. We started... you know I worked for the same company for ten years and in 1980 I got married and my wife was from here, from Canada and

they had... for them, lucky for them they had left Uganda. They had fled from Uganda long before Idi Amin came to power.”

**Shezan: “Really? That’s really interesting.”**

Jay: “Yeah they had left and they had gone to India, the whole family. I think what happened in Uganda was that before Idi Amin, Milton Obote was in power, he was doing things gradually and he did realize that the African people should have an opportunity to build businesses in certain areas where there is not Asian monopoly, Indian monopoly on businesses. So in the place where I was born Kaliro we could do business, we could trade because we were citizens, if you are a non-citizen then you had to move somewhere else, one of the other towns or cities. And so for my wife’s family as soon as this thing happened, I think it sort of was writing on the wall that this is not good. From this it became something else can happen and we don’t want to take a chance. We don’t want to stick around for things to deteriorate, so they left, the whole family. At a good time, because they were allowed to take all their assets, we didn’t. They were able to do that. So in 1980 from India my wife’s family came to Canada and they settled in Toronto. So...”

Shezan: “How did you guys meet, then?”

Jay: “Well through a cousin of mine in England, because my wife had come there for a visit to see her sister who was already married and living in Leicester, we met and then one thing led to another, we were introduced so yeah. So we got married in 1980 and then I guess in 1981 we came to visit Canada to come and see my in-laws, see what Canada is all about. And during this time my wife was a landed immigrant, but she wasn’t a citizen. So you can remain out of the country but within six months you have to come back otherwise you lose your landed status. So she did that a couple of times and then we realized that we have to make up our mind whether we want to remain in UK or if we want to immigrate to Canada. And I guess I was looking for a change, I’d been living in England for ten years, I said I need to somehow go somewhere else. Uganda would have been a great place to go back to but that wasn’t... it wasn’t a practical proposition, right? So we decided to, yeah immigrate to Canada in 1982.

So 1982 was a North American recession and it was... even in the high commission when I went to the interview they said you know Canada at the moment is in a recession and you’ll have a tough time getting a job. It doesn’t matter you have ten years of experience, it still won’t be enough so I hope that you have savings that you can count on because it may take a year, two years for you to find a job, right? That kind of put me back a bit and I’m thinking, is this the right thing? But my wife said, “It should be okay, don’t worry.” She managed to find a job, she came earlier before me, got a job. She had worked here so it was easier for her to find a job because she had what they asked for which was Canadian experience, it doesn’t matter you know British experience, it has to be Canadian experience. So for her, she got a job and then I joined her about three or four months later and I started looking for a job, and it was an uphill battle. I was doing... I was willing to do anything, started doing telemarketing jobs, and you know how difficult those are. Just on the phone, people hanging up on you, but I did that.

So I did that for about a year, different jobs, worked for a company that used to make those portable heaters, you know. I had three or four different jobs during that year and then my brother in law, he was

working for Royal Bank, so he said... and they weren't hiring at the time but I would have gotten a job right away. "You know somebody is... there's six months job, are you interested?" You know six months... that way you can get a foot in the door and then hopefully something will come from that, and so that was in 1983. Started working there and it was a day job, after six months expired that area was being reengineered and there were a lot of automation integration at the time, and this was a position that we need to eliminate. So they said, "Well, we can... we don't want to let you go but would you be willing to work in a data centre?" I said, "Fine." He said, "Yeah, it's going to be the night shift, midnight to eight." So... I didn't have a choice, right? I had to take it.

So I did that for a year but I just couldn't take it, working the night shift was just brutal. Some people thrive on it, like it, the idea of saying work at night and then you have the day to yourself, get some sleep and still have some time leftover of the day and you can do things that you want to do, otherwise you wouldn't have... you had to wait til the weekend. For me... this is not for me. I sort of said, "No, I can't do this anymore." So they said, "How about working in a branch?" I said, "Sure," and he said, "Days." So I started working for a branch in the downtown area and yeah, I liked that. It was pretty challenging because you had to learn everything, right? But the training was good and the progression of jobs from that point on and eventually I ended up in finance, the finance area of the bank and I've been there the last seven, eight years I've been working in finance. I've been with the Royal Bank about thirty, thirty one years."

**Shezan: "Oh wow. That makes sense, wow. That's a long time."**

Jay: "And yeah, so I mean I would say yes, Canada is great, people have been good to me, I have two boys you know, they are both finished their studies and they are working. So life is... life is pretty good, but I still remember Uganda, you can never forget that. I guess the only thing I will be able to hope for is to go and visit, but the idea of at some point when I was coming to Canada I said at some point – I used to tell everybody that – at some point I may be, this is just a circle that is going to take me back to Uganda. And I would like to live there, just return to Uganda. But I don't think... Uganda has changed so much..."

**Shezan: "A lot, yeah."**

Jay: "It's not the way it was when we were there. So that option is not a practical option. But I definitely would like to go and visit, beautiful country, and the people are nice as well. Like we went there in 2000 and we went there in 2008 I mean, such a safe country, nobody would bother you, things did happen there too I know, but there's no hesitation, I would go there for a visit, you know?"

**Shezan: "When the government in Uganda had announced – I think it's in 1985, maybe it was in 1990 – that they invited South Asians to come back, the Indians that were expelled could go back and make claims for their property or anything... did you guys partake in that whole process?"**

Jay: "We had... the property we had was in Kaliro where I was born and it's a very small town and when we went there... during that time I guess we had property in Kampala or one of the cities then it would have made it worthwhile to pursue that. But we did talk about that at the time and my father was alive at the time and he said... you know there's no point, it's not even worth anything and whoever is using

it... that's our contribution to the country. Whoever is using it and if they're happy living there in that house then that's fine. But when I went in 2000 and I went to see... the house has become government offices. It's the town of Kaliro's main hub where everything happens, our house. All the rooms... when I went there our living room, there was a town clerk sitting there at a desk. [Laughter] That... I mean you know and all different rooms. Uganda has made so much progress, computers there in a small town like Kaliro, I was flabbergasted, wow, this is progress. All the rooms they've turned into offices and it's really... they're really looking after the place. And when I went there in 2000 and I... I didn't want to sort of say, "This is my house, can I see it?" So I had taken papers with me and said, "Look, this used to be our house." And they got kind of worried that we were sort of reclaiming it, and I said, "No that's not what I'm here for. I'm just here because my two boys are with me and I want them to see the house I was born in." I want to see it myself, of course. So they said, "Oh, that's no problem for us, feel free." So it was nice to see that the place is being well kept, the house is well kept and... yeah."

**Shezan: "How did you find that difference between living in England and then coming to Canada, was there..."**

Jay: "Yeah, see England is very social, right? I mean... have you been to England?"

**Shezan: "Yeah, so I did a year on exchange at Warwick."**

Jay: "Oh really? England is... you're very social, even during the weekday you go and see people at your local pub, right? And there are pubs everywhere, everybody has their own local pub and so yeah that was a big change that I noticed between the UK and Canada. Whereas the UK, the social life is very different, it's an everyday thing, right, whereas here..."

**Shezan: "You have to wait until Friday."**

Jay: "Yeah, Monday... exactly, weekdays nobody... everyone's running around doing their stuff and everybody's so busy that you don't even have time to pick up the phone and call your friend, that's how busy life is. Especially when you're working downtown and living in the suburbs then you have your commute. You're spending three hours going back and forth, or at least a couple of hours and that takes a big chunk out of your day. So... it was a big difference. But in a lot of ways I find having lived here longer than anywhere else I do find that... the wide open spaces... England is so small, congested. The weather, we have the extremes. In England where I was in Southampton the weather was much milder, you hardly get any snow, right? And even if you do, it will disappear in a day or so, right? Whereas here, snow... even when I came here in the summer I was mesmerized. You actually get such nice weather here, right?"

**Shezan: "I guess they tricked you that way."**

Jay: "My brother in law at that time said you get a lot of snow... but honestly no, I thought he was kidding, right? It's hard to imagine the difference between the two climates until you actually experience it. So that was another adjustment. The first winter was like, wow. In those days we used to get a lot more snow than we do now. Tons and tons of it, right? It was different. But having lived here

for so long now, if I have to go back even to England I would have a tough time adjusting to that, this is... this country is much better.”

**Shezan: “Would you say that you’re... how would you identify yourself if I asked you, what are you? Would you say you’re a Canadian of Ugandan origin, or would you say you’re a Ugandan Canadian? A... Indo-Canadian? How would you answer that question?”**

Jay: “I still... you know I still consider, I’ve always said... My boss here at work is a Nigerian, an African, right? And I’ve always said to him, his name is Yemi, I said, “I was born in Africa.” He says, “Yeah, but you look Indian.” I said, “Yeah, I’m Indian, but I do not consider myself Indian, I consider myself African because that’s where my upbringing was.” So I’m African Canadian, that’s what I consider myself as, right? Culturally, yes. Culturally I’m an Indian, right? But in terms of where I was born I’m an African, because I was born in Africa. More African Canadian than Indo Canadian.”

**Shezan: “Yeah that’s the same way my mom answered the question. She was like, “Yeah I watch Bollywood movies and I cook Indian food, but at the end of the day when I think of home I’m not thinking of pani poori on the street, I’m thinking of barbecued corn, Mogo, matoke and nyama. That’s home, that’s not India for me, I don’t want to go to India, I want to go...””**

Jay: “That’s the thing, even after all these years having lived outside Africa, when we go back we can still relate, you know? Whereas if we went to India, it’s still a foreign country to us, you know? Whereas going back to Uganda, it’s like coming home. It still feels like coming home.”

**Shezan: “Still feels like coming home. Because my mom has never been back and I want to plan a surprise to take her back when I finish and just be like, “This is your plane ticket. We’re going.” And I was a little bit worried that she hasn’t been back in so long, maybe Uganda’s changed too much, maybe it might not feel the same. But it’s good to hear that you’re saying that.”**

Jay: “No, I’ve been there twice and nobody... we were going in taxis and if somebody were to rob us it would have been so easy. But I think people are... people are fine. We were living, walking even at night in the streets in Jinja and... nobody would. Kenya is a different story, even in broad daylight. But Uganda is very safe. I would love to go back there for a visit, and I will go. Without any hesitation. The country has progressed so much, one thing I will say is that... I know that what happened to us was pretty tragic. We lost everything and we were kicked out, but I think it made the Africans, the Ugandan Africans, they were forced to fill that gap and it took them a long time. But they did fill that gap and they are entrepreneurs, they are businessmen, they are doing really very well. And I think if we were there, if we remained there they wouldn’t have gotten the opportunity, right?

So I think in that respect yes, it was tragic for us, but for them I think it was an opportunity. They’re... like I said, you see businesses everywhere on the streets, everywhere. It’s just a vibrant country now at the moment... and freedom. It’s not a democracy as we know it, but its freedom of speech, right? And freedom to sort of do whatever you will excel in, right? It’s there, it’s all up to you. People had their opportunity and that can only happen if there’s political stability, but there is for the last... since 1979. At least 1980 I know after Idi Amin left there were still issues and Obote came back and things didn’t work out. But after 1981, 1985, it’s been pretty good. And a lot of immigration from India, again.”



**Shezan: "Yeah, it's started again."**

Jay: "It sort of... like the whole history is repeating itself. And I met some of them, right in Kaliro."

**Shezan: "Oh really? Wow."**

Jay: "Yeah, I was very surprised when I went in 2000... and Kaliro was a single street with houses on both sides, and businesses, right? When I went there I still assumed it's still one street. And I met some Africans and I started talking to them and they said, "No, there's another street behind this one." I said, "What are you talking about?" And he says, "Yeah, there's Indians living there." "You're joking, take me there." And so I met them and they said, "Yeah, we are from India and this is like a paradise for us and we are able to... in India we were struggling because we were so poor." And here he has a business, he was a trader, they had a shop with the house at the back of the shop, right? And yeah they are doing well. I saw them again in 2008, eight years later and they have done so well, it's incredible. There's no restriction on sending funds back to India, right? And I said, "What about safety though?" He said, "There's no issue here, you know. The Africans... when I go to Kampala to buy the goods the Africans are there, I don't have to look after my wife to make sure that she's safe." So that's how safe Uganda is, it's amazing. It's an amazing country. And that's why Winston Churchill called – it's so beautiful as well – they called it the pearl of Africa. That's how beautiful the weather is, it's just so perfect all year round, it's just..."

**Shezan: "One of my friends from Uganda was joking with me, he's like, "There's no need for this Weather Network app on your phone, you just wear shorts and a t-shirt everyday, you don't need to question, is it going to rain today, is it not? You just go.""**

Jay: "Yeah and it's hot, but it's not humid hot. Nice cool breeze, and it's just a fantastic place."

**Shezan: "That's good to hear. And when your family had gone to England, what was everybody else doing? Your brothers and sisters and your parents? Did they... everyone started working right away?"**

Jay: "Yeah so my father was obviously at that age where we felt that he didn't need... also there was a language problem, he couldn't speak English, right? So he would have to learn the language, which he did, he picked up bits and pieces and he could get by. But I think we as a family decided we don't want to send him out to be working, especially with the weather being what it is. But the rest of my brothers, I had four brothers who were all older than me, and two younger..."

**Shezan: "All boys? All eight of you guys?"**

Jay: "We're six brothers and one sister."

**Shezan: "Oh, okay."**

Jay: "Yeah, so you know we said the two younger ones because they are so young let them go to school."

**Shezan: "How young were they, do you remember?"**

Jay: "My younger brother was fourteen and the other one was ten."

**Shezan: “Ten, okay. And you’re the third...”**

Jay: “Third from the bottom. And yeah so we decided if we’re going to make it happen here then we all have to work because we can, right. So we all started working and living in one big... it wasn’t a very nice, warm house, but it was big enough for us. And you know in England the heating system is so bad, in those days it was anyways, now I’m sure it’s changed quite a bit. But in those days you had those kerosene heaters that blow out smoke and all that. So yeah, it was an experience in the beginning. And slowly and slowly the money started coming in and slowly we started improving our lives, moved into a better house. Yeah, but it was a challenge. A bigger challenge in the beginning in England, but after having lived in England for ten years and coming here to Canada I think it was... because my wife’s family had already been here like almost five years, you know. They had come directly from India for them, so they had the support system, which wasn’t there in England. The government helped us initially with the transit camp, but once we were in Southampton we were on our own pretty much. So we had to find our own way over there, and it took a while, but we did.”

**Shezan: “How did you guys find the adjustment to food in England? I guess you were still able to find most Indian spices because there are a lot of Indians in England. Like the difference in food, because you guys went from eating a totally different diet.”**

Jay: “Oh you mean between England and Canada?”

**Shezan: “No between Uganda and England.”**

Jay: “Oh, I think... the thing that we missed was the mogo and the matoke, those things we missed. But other than that... because in England culturally our diet was still Indian. So in that respect it wasn’t a big change for us. Yeah in Uganda we would make use of the mogo and the matoke, but very frequently and that wasn’t easily available in England. But it wasn’t a big change of the diet.”

**Shezan: “Yeah that one’s been very interesting for people that came straight to Canada, they’re like, “When we came here in the 1970’s you could not find curry powder.”**

Jay: “In Uganda I would say everything was fresh, right? It wasn’t... you just went to the market or you grew it in your garden, your vegetables. So in terms of that, in terms of quality of the food it was much better in Uganda than in England because a lot of these things in England came from outside. It couldn’t be locally grown so it came in from outside, and you don’t know how long it’s been travelling before it gets to the store. Other than that it was okay.”

**Shezan: “I think that’s all for me, the questions I have. Is there anything you wanted to add about your experience overall?”**

Jay: “No, I can’t think of anything else to add. You know, there are African’s here from Uganda as well in Toronto and we – as John might have mentioned – when we celebrated fifty years of Uganda’s independence here in Toronto, I was part of the committee with John. And there were people here that I had never met of the Ugandan Africans that are actually living in Toronto and some of them... when you hear the stories of some of them... we are so lucky. One of the Africans he said he was taken away by Idi Amin’s soldiers, and once that happens your family thinks you’re gone, never heard of again,

right? But he said, “Luckily for me my wife bribed some of the people at the prison and they let me out, and I just immediately left the country.” He went to Ireland, studied medicine there, now he has a practice of successful pediatricians in Newmarket. So he was saying, “If you think you had it bad, think of me, I almost died, you know?” But he says, “I just count my blessings that I was able to get out in those circumstances and you should be as well because things could have been a lot worse. A lot of you could have been just shot there. You were allowed to leave, get on a plane, and get out. Yes, you lost everything, but you’re still alive.”

I think it sort of... when he said that, it puts a different perspective on how we should be looking at this, in a positive light rather than saying, “Well we lost everything.” And it was a big loss right? When you have made a commitment of forty years to a country and suddenly it’s all gone, you know. It hurts, right? But the point is really, we should be grateful that we were able to get out in one piece. That’s so important in hindsight when you look at it. Knowing what was going on at that time, we could have been one of the statistics of the three hundred thousand that lost their life during that time. So in that respect we were lucky that we are where we are.”

**Shezan: “Have you always been part of the Ugandan Association in Toronto? The Ugandan Association...”**

Jay: “Yeah, I think we wanted to continue something but I guess... I think the thing is that people’s lives are so busy here that trying to find... and it was good that we were able to do that in 2012. And doing the event... I don’t know if John told you but we had matoke from Uganda and the Africans made it here and brought it to the event for everybody to try, so that was an amazing thing to do, right? And you know the way they prepare the matoke on the banana leaves, they put it on that and they make this... kind of a puree out of peanuts and you take the matoke and you dip it in this puree of peanuts and some other ingredients that you put in there and you eat it... and it just brought back memories of the way we used to eat matoke back home, right? It’s just amazing.”

**Shezan: “Well thank you very much for your time, I really appreciate you telling me stories.”**

Jay: “Great, well I hope this was useful information.”

**Shezan: “Of course, yeah. Everyone’s story is always very unique, especially when people talk about identity and what it means to be who they are today, everyone’s answer is completely different, nothing has been the same, which is nice to hear. So people feel... some people feel really strong attachments to Uganda still and they’re like, “It’s still home for me.””**

Jay: “Just before you came I was reading about Mobina Jaffer’s father, right? And apparently he was buried in Uganda.”

**Shezan: “Yeah they flew him back, yeah. They had a ceremony there and everything.”**

Jay: “I was just reading about that, and when you talk about the attachment... I think it never goes away. Yeah and he... like he was saying I had African friends there who I missed, I missed them. So yeah when I read something like that I’m thinking they have that strong attachment, sometimes people don’t realize... like when you’re talking about Uganda and the attachment you have you don’t realize. But

when you hear stories like this, other people who have had the same feeling... you realize that you're not alone. All those people who have left have that attachment to this country. Because it was a unique way of living, we were lucky that we were able to experience that life. And I think that's what we have to look back on and say okay, rather than looking at the negative side of what happened to us, we say no, we should count our blessings that we were able to live in that environment in such a beautiful country and cherish that memory, you know? That's it."

**Shezan: "Yeah, someone had told me that they found the quality of life was much better in Uganda, the standard of living was less, but it didn't matter, no one cared."**

Jay: "It didn't matter at all. It's just a very fun filled life, we used to do all kinds of things, invent our own games... it was an amazing life. It's good that now and again people... they still send me pictures from school days and somehow people stumble on these pictures and they say, "Oh, wow." Black and white pictures, places they've visited, what it used to look like in those days and you see a picture of it. It's just amazing. I know that people are still thinking about Uganda, and they are trying to sort of... whatever memory they had... because a lot of things were lost, right? Pictures and everything were lost, we had taken so many pictures and God knows what happened to them in the haste of leaving the country, a lot of those keepsakes were left behind. So it's nice when you see... somebody stumbles on something and they share it with somebody. Treasure, it's treasure."

**Shezan: "It is! Well that reminds me, you brought up school. Did you go to a... because there were many different kinds of schools. Did you go to a convent school, public school?"**

Jay: "No it was a public school. We had... it was a mix. Africans, Indians, everyone, I think the only problem was because there you had to pay the fees and it wasn't free, education wasn't free so I guess... and Africans had a hard time. The affluent ones, yes they could, but not everyone could so it was tough for them. But I think now things have changed, the education is much... at least for the elementary schooling it is free I believe it is. And that gives a lot of opportunity because education is everything, right? If education is freely available everywhere in those developing countries I think it would make a huge difference in the quality of life. It's all about that and I think people realize that now even in India and Pakistan, Bangladesh, any of the African countries. If you want to bring the country up, then make sure that education is available to all the children, not just the ones who can afford it. So that's... I think that's slowly changing, it'll take a while, but I do find there are kids in Uganda now who are so happy and I think it's good to see a country that was left behind is making progress."

**Shezan: "Have you been to India?"**

Jay: "I've been to India."

**Shezan: "How would you compare that? Going to India versus going back to Uganda?"**

Tanna: "Yeah it's... because I went to see where my father was born and the town where he was born... and it's still very interesting, but as I said, it doesn't feel like home. It's like any other country that you'd visit, yeah you know that you have your roots there because culturally you are Indian but it doesn't feel... I mean it's a beautiful country, again, India, you go to one part of it and... each part is so different.

In terms of language and everything, right? In terms of food... huge, vast country but it just doesn't feel like here, it doesn't feel like this is my country. Whereas when you go to Uganda, yes, this is my country. It just feels so good to be back."

**Shezan: "That's good. I'm glad you've had the opportunity to go back twice and to go back..."**

Jay: "I hope I still do. My eldest brother who is in England, he hasn't been. Yeah he hasn't been, because he was kind of dejected when it happened and for him it was harder to sort of accept it, which he did eventually. But he said, "You know, I want to live with the memories rather than what the country has turned into now. And I say to him, "Yeah, it's not the same as when we were there, it's different. But you want to see... go back to where you were born and I think that's a good thing to do, right? And see the progress the country has made and it's very safe." It has problems that any other developing country has, but in the last twenty years it's made so much progress that people's lives have been changed and there's no fear that was there when Idi Amin was there. And even after he was gone there was that mentality, that fear... even if you went in 2000 if you were to take pictures, they would say, "No, no, no, please don't take my picture." The Africans, they'd say, "Please don't take my picture." There was... I think what Idi Amin did in nine years was instill that fear in everybody that it just... it took a while for people to overcome that, but I think they have.

It's a whole new generation, right? That's why when we go there to them you are a tourist visiting their country. But when you talk to them and say, "Yeah I was actually born here." They say, "Really? Why did you leave?" Some of them... obviously some of them know what we are talking about Idi Amin, "Oh yeah, we know about Idi Amin." But yes, it's a beautiful country, amazing. The source of the river Nile, you can go and see that."

**Shezan: "So many beautiful things in that country, I've made a bucket list for when I go."**

Jay: "You'd like it. You'd love it."

**Shezan: "Do you still speak Swahili a little bit?"**

Jay: "I've lost touch with it, that's the thing. I still sort of... occasionally when I see somebody from Uganda we try to speak, but when you've gone away from it for so long..."

**Shezan: "There's a lot of different dialects, too."**

Jay: "Yeah, yeah, that's right. But we used to speak it fluently over there, right? All the time, you know, and unless you keep up with it, even the language... yeah the words will come back but somehow you lose that fluency."

**Shezan: "That accent and..."**

Jay: "Yeah, everything is changed. Because when we were doing the independence thing the Africans, they could... because they meet socially among themselves, they still converse in Swahili, right? More so than in English so for them... we would exchange a few words here and there with them, and that was quite nice. But we couldn't speak as fluently as they could, but it was nice to meet them. You know when you meet... and I think that's the thing, I don't think that yes, in Uganda there was not that

intermingling, right? Culturally we kept to ourselves, and I guess the Africans, but we were always... I had African friends. There was no sort of, we are the upper class because of the colour of our skin, or we are better than them. Some people may have thought that, but I think generally speaking the majority of the people treated Africans fairly, right? As sort of equals.

So it was nice to run into Ugandan Africans here after all this time, right here in Canada. Yeah some of them like the doctor, the pediatrician, even he, even despite what he went through and had to leave the country in trying circumstances. He's building a house in Uganda and he wants to eventually go and live there once he retires. So I mean people have that attachment, otherwise he is doing so well here. He's a pediatrician and he's settled here and his kids are here, but he said, "Yeah, I do want to live here as well, but the winter go to Uganda, I want to give back to that country as well in any way I can." So I think people have that, and I would like to do that as well when I do go back and help where help is needed. Help is needed more over there than it is here, yeah there is help needed here as well, but what I'm saying is there the need is even greater. And I think if you can with your and with our experience of what we have learned and lived in the Western countries, and if we can do something to help them with the skills that we had then that's giving back to the years that we were fortunate enough to live in Uganda. Right? Because those are the greatest... I would say those are the best years of my life growing up in Uganda – there's no comparison."

**Shezan: "Well thank you again, thank you very much for welcoming me into your home."**

Jay: "It was great talking about this at length, yeah it was fun."

[End of transcript].