



Jane/Finch – Those two words together, say volumes. Depending on where you live, the message varies.

A lot of people have grown up with the belief it's an unsafe, menacing place to be without even having stepped foot into the area. It's judgments like that which fuels the fire of activist and filmmaker, Paul Nguyen. "Jane-Finch is dangerous' or 'the area is full of gang members'; it's funny how these stereotypes can be put to rest with just a simple visit," he says.

While he was growing up, Paul says he and his friends felt "blacklisted" by people automatically making negative assumptions about him just because they're from Jane and Finch. "Even a city councillor once said that 80% of people in Jane-Finch don't pay to get on the bus. Like WTF?! I got tired of my community being stepped on so I decided to show our positive side by creating Jane-Finch.com."

The website is a platform which produces stories about the Jane-Finch community by the Jane-Finch community. "We make lots of videos about life in the neighbourhood. We like to focus on the good stuff, but we won't shy away from serious issues. Residents can speak out against social injustice, crime or just about any hot topic." It serves as a creative vessel for the youth who help produce the content as well as a forum for discussion. "We aim to give people the real story without any censorship or bias. It's been our hallmark to give it raw."

Paul has mentored countless kids who have in turn given back to the community. He has made it his mission to break misconceptions about his neighborhood and empower its kids. "I wanted to show youth that they can reach their goals no matter where they come from... We want to prove that you can achieve your goals with heart and determination." Paul recalls an unforgettable moment where Canadian Rapper, Maestro Fresh Wes, came to the area and sat down with them to shoot an interview. After that moment Paul says, "We got kids thinking they can be reporters, producers, whatever they want. Anything's possible."

He says that the website is just a small example of how easy it can be to break down prejudice and racism which are all born out of fear. "If we want to live in a peaceful and prosperous community we need to embrace our differences and work together, not against each other... Get to know your neighbour and you'll be surprised how similar we all are."

To learn more visit: jane-finch.com

Posted by Community Contributor Samira Zia Rehman

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