



CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor Mike Colle

Seconded by: Councillor Anthony Perruzza

Toronto City Council is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Denise Jones on December 3, 2020.

Born in 1956 in Portland, Jamaica, Denise began acting at an early age in local stage productions before studying at the University of Windsor and returning back to Jamaica. Denise met her future husband, Allan, who was also an actor and the two decided to make Canada their home. They raised their two sons, Jesse and Jerimi, in Sudbury and continued to pursue their passion for plays and theatre productions with the Jamaican Canadian Association.

For Denise and Allan, it was a natural step moving from acting and theatre into the live music scene where they went on to found Jones and Jones Productions which created reggae concerts and productions. Reggae On Yah at The Great Hall in 1987 was the first big live event, and later in 1993 came the festival Reggaebana which celebrated reggae and Caribana. The production company went on to establish Jambana World Festival, one of Toronto's top summer festivals. So influential in introducing the country to up-and-coming Jamaican reggae stars that reggae was created as its own category at the Juno Awards, changing the landscape of Canadian music and shining a light on generations of reggae artists on the world's stage.

Denise believed in pursuing passions and helping others and her commitment to these beliefs was evident throughout her life. She was dedicated to community building in her roles with the Jamaican Canadian Association and the Black Business and Professional Association. Her significant contributions were recognized in 2014 as a recipient of a Harry Jerome Award and in 2018 when she was deemed one of the 100 Accomplished Black Canadian Women. Denise was also awarded for her contributions to music with a Juno Award and a lifetime achievement award from Urban Music Association of Canada.

Denise was a loving wife and mother, and an influential talent, but she will also be remembered by all as an exemplary role model and a champion of Black and Caribbean arts and culture in Canada. Longtime Toronto Star columnist Royson James said that she was "Always concerned about the diaspora and committed to projecting Black culture on the same stage as the others in the Canadian mosaic." Denise was a role model, mentor, and as Royson James explains, "In her company we grew: she pushed us and we got better."

Denise will be deeply missed by the City of Toronto.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Denise's family.

December 16, 2020