

Interview with Shopowner

042

DS: So you were in Montserrat during the time of the Hurricane or you came back?

MR: I was, I was here, actually I had uhm two businesses during the hurricane. I had one in Plymouth which is now the the modern day Pompeii and one at the airport which no longer is also covered. Um yes I was, I was definitely here after Hurricane Hugo and I was one of the first businesses to start again after Hurricane Hugo in sort of the rebuilding process. Um and I stayed here and rebuild it again in both port businesses which I eventually lost in the volcano and unfortunately you know the insurance companies never paid anything, so, which is why again one of the reasons I'm back here.

DS: Uh hm.

MR: Startin', startin' from small startin' from scratch again.

DS: Right.

MR: And then as I said eh my grandmother met her untimely death in '94 (slowly), and so went off to England (brief pause) for awhile and and and decided to go back to university at a (brief pause) very (laughs) mature age and I did tourist management and then I came back and I worked in the tourist um um field for awhile and then I decided no I think I really need to get back to my own business because that's what I enjoy best.

DS: Uh hmm.

MR: So, that's why I'm at this present location and that's what I'm doing now.

102

MR: It helped me...

DS: Heal the pain?

MR: Yes it helped me with the pain and and as I said I lost everything I've lost because I wasn't here I wasn't here there was someone running my business (brief pause) and so I've lost everything with my shops (skip in the tape)...

DS: Hm.

JG: and insurance company never paid a cent, but that's that's behind (brief pause) me now.

DS: Right.

MR: So, the thing is to to move forward and Montserrat is moving forward we're at that stage where I mean we need to forget all the past and we need to show the positive side we we building, were moving North, we get a new made airport, so people are happy, they got lots of construction going on a lot of people uh uh are trying to come back because our population went to as low as three thousand five hundred and now we are up to five thousand again so we are moving forward and and people are really interested you know you just missed our festivities?

DS: Yeah I know.

MR: You just missed uh uh oooooo carnival which is this kind of a celebrations which are almost a whole month. And I mean a lot of people came back from the UK and Canada and everywhere Montserradians that have been abroad came back and they saw the festivities so it's a positive side right now we are moving on and um everyone need to do one we all try to do what we can to make sure that moves forward because Montserrat is going to a model for the way the Caribbean needs to be, not the way the Caribbean used to be. We are going to ensure that (Jadine Laughs).

DS: When you were in England during the time of the volcano were there any thoughts for you to come back um when the volcano was erupting or?

MR: Oh, yes I I really wanted to come back but as I said when I when I went to to England after my grandmothers death I planned to be there for two years because of (brief pause) well just to heal and (brief pause) and then I decided to go to university because that served a purpose, I says okay, my grandmother died so I can do this, and because I had already started it was, I knew to finish in four or five years of my education, but like I said I came back the first (word) when I raised the funds and and and present presented the first scholarship and as soon as I was finished my education I came back I was the first manager of the tropical mansions suites hotel. So my degree finished in 2000 and tropical mansions suites opened in '99, I came back for the opening and just went back and as soon as I finished my degree I was back on Montserrat (Jadine laughs).

(Long Pause)

MR: So this is what its all about and and that's what we need when all those people coming coming home and also we need people to realize that ya know um (brief

pause) Montserrat is no longer covered in ash people are moving on and unfortunately there's a myth out there, that um our cover its still covered in ash and that we're not living comfortable. We are, and I hope we've told enough um to show people that Montserrat is back (brief pause) and better then ever (brief pause) and that we have in fact moved on and and we're we're we're we're we're moving even further yet and we're going to do better.

(pause)

DS: Um because you were in Montserrat before and you came back after the volcano have people perceived you in a different way because (brief pause) maybe not to them, but, maybe to some people it seemed as though you left because of the volcano?

MR: Unfortunately, um I don't think so, um but having lived for so many years in Europe and in England even when I came back people perceived you to be um different but um I managed through my businesses to blend in and I I think that that's not the case in my it is the case in in many people as well as this Christmas when we had (brief pause) um our festivals and one young lady she was actually born here and she was in and calipsyfyin did very well actually she's named after me her name is Jadine and um I heard the comment where people were saying she doesn't live here she doesn't deserve the crown which is rather sad (brief pause) because she's a born Montserratian. And she was planning to come back home to live in a year and half. So, there are still some people that perception but I think eventually, that will be ironed out. I guess people are still grievin' somehow and they need something to to get back at but uh um (brief pause) I guess yes that perception is there and that's something we need to sort of like eradicate (brief pause) because once you're a Montserratian, you're a Montserratian (pause) and uh no matter where you are (brief pause) um, um I know a lot of people they left um because of the children were at school age and schools were closed so the mothers had to leave to take the children to study and unfortunately (brief pause) some of the families got disintegrated because um the fathers stayed to work and the mothers stayed in so and then and then you have the in the family but I know within their heart of heart they didn't really want to leave (brief pause) but they had no choice (pause) and then I think a lot of them left because of the children (pause) and it would be difficult for them to come

150

back right now because the children have completed their education which makes it rather (brief pause) difficult now with this GPS where where America sending back home 292 Montserrations. Ya know, and there's really no way for them to come back to yet so and um if people if we could um (brief pause) speed up the building process and have provide homes and jobs, people would want to come back, people don't want to be out there I mean who wouldn't want to be in the warm and friendly

atmosphere that Montserrat has to (brief pause) to offer. (pause) So, we we really think um that (brief pause) people will, eventually come back and and people here will not find the kind of (pause) as you say, you left and I stayed.

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DS: And you said your bus you had a business in Plymouth and at the airport...

MR: Yes, yes.

DS: um how has business well there not there anymore how has business changed for you?

JG: Well it has because I've actually my my business was just looking and I used to do Caribbean things. I used to have fashion shows at the View Point Hotel and there were things and all that has changed now and what I'm now into is that I I I think I see a need for people now rebuilding and they need household items so I'm tryin' to try and produce that in one of a kind uh household items so my whole business umm has changed, I am hoping though that when the new airport reopens, I will have just little weekend and uh that shop will then be um sort of like, the way my my shops used to be but we with some um um from the various Caribbean islands, I would have the best of Caribbean things. So, its has given me another avenue actually, because I would never have thought of going of going to the household, so me like I said it's a positive thing. Pause (word)

DS: Have you been to your old, have you been back to the sites of your old business?

MR: Yes, we actually went into Plymouth and actually I went into one ministers of government Mr. Wilson whose used to have a shop just opposite mine. And so I was scared to go with him and I says so Mr. Wilson so where (brief pause) exactly "Just Looking" have been? Because this is a two-story building and it is there's nothing of it. You sort of like, looking at the at the pier and you sort of like figuring your way ok well "Just Looking" probably would have been here and my shop would have been there he's going and so this is that, but yes I've been back, and um (brief pause) its really funny, when I first came back we did around the island tour. And, for the first time I was seein' it and I have mixed emotions. I had uh emotions of lost, but the thing have strongly emotions looking at WOW! look at all the new land that we've had so mine was more positive, then negative. Because I was thinking oh my God look at all this new land look at what we can do with it. That that's the way I was feelin' but initial loss yes, but I I don't know if I see this whole

(meow of cat)

thing as a positive thing. I see that we've always complaining that (brief pause) we haven't got the white sand, we haven't got the things the other islands have and I always said well why not, we have black sand, black sand has very positive uh (brief pause) points, why can't we use that, why can't we promote that. And now, I mean where else in the Caribbean can you go and be part of a live volcano that is, a fantastic tourist attraction and we just sittin' on it doing nothing. So like I said it's a positive thing. We have now got something positive yes. The only thing I see negative about this volcano to be honest, are the persons who died. (brief pause) And if you've if you've you've read about it, there was no need for them to die because they should not have been in that area. And that's the only lost, although I've lost everything, you can start all again given the opportunity, and we have a golden opportunity to make a lot of money out of this volcano and we need to start (brief pause) doing something about it. Because this is eh its its no longer negative, yes the initial shock is over and everything is over, now its time to sort of like, sort of like, it's a cash crop, you know what that is, in so we need to be using that and moving forward.

ER: Ok.

MR: When you come again you will see a new Montserrat. A rich Montserrat.

DS: So, you have a very positive outlook towards this volcano, do you think other people around you have this or do you think?

MR: Yes.

DS: People have a...

MR: Yes, yes. I think we have and it's just, eh I guess we just need to get that get up and go attitude to go do something about it. So um, hopefully um eventually we'll be in a position some way to start gettin' a few of us together who have the same attitude that's really do something about it. (words)

DS: Um how do you think people, or how you, how did people act differently towards the hurricane as opposed to (brief pause) the volcano?

MR: Well, the hurricane, uh people started rebuilding immediately, but the volcano remember I mean, a whole, a third of the island situated wiped out is no longer habitable so it's a different situation. With the hurricane ok you had to fix your roof and you could get on with it again. Whereas the volcano people a lot of people lost there homes just completely buried.

Chief Minister Bramble: Good morning, good morning.

253

MR: so it's a different reaction (Long Pause) it's a completely different dif different situation. Um but again, whereas th th the volcano as I said the volcanoes a positive thing now because we can we can actually use it as a tourist attraction.

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