

The Guardians: Reshaping History Project and Exhibition

Interview with Yeshiyah Israel, 2021

Yeshiyah Israel ([00:01](#)):

My name is Yeshiyah B. Israel. I am the CEO of YBI African apparel and fashions located at 5115 Park Heights Avenue, a minority business, a minority woman in business. I am the president for the Pimlico Merchant Association, as well as the advocate for the Pimlico community.

Speaker 2 ([00:27](#)):

Okay. And miss Yeshiyah, what, how do you see your role? I heard you say advocate, but can you describe your role in your community, in your neighborhood?

Yeshiyah Israel ([00:39](#)):

My role in the community, as far as being a voice, being a voice, whereas some people may be a little hesitant about speaking up for things that know need to get better, or if they may have had some situations that they may not have much success in the city council in Baltimore city. So therefore just being connected with other nonprofit communities, such as BMORE Beautiful Baltimore, office of sustainability, healthy neighbors, and just having them as partners to come on board to assist in the community and which ever way is possible.

Speaker 2 ([01:24](#)):

So would you say you're connector, you're a resource you're a leader?

Yeshiyah Israel ([01:30](#)):

I would say first I'm a leader. I am a role model. I'm a negotiator, positive influence and a lot of adjectives.

Speaker 2 ([01:47](#)):

A fire starter.

Yeshiyah Israel ([01:48](#)):

Fire starter.

Speaker 2 ([01:49](#)):

Fire starter. Okay. And what are some projects you're most proud of or things to feel proud of?

Yeshiyah Israel ([01:58](#)):

A couple of projects. One of the projects I'm most proud of is Pimlico Golden Garden. Pimlico Golden Garden was a particular area, which it was called the pan yard years ago. It's located at 3100 Spaulding Avenue. The area was blight and it needed love and needed attention. And the love and attention it needed was trees that was overgrown trash and debris, and just some activities of positiveness, whereas people could come and sit and enjoy. So therefore we created and we work with various partners, such

as Clvic Works and Civic Works helped with cutting down the old trees and making red beds and planting flowers and picnic tables.

Yeshiyah Israel ([02:47](#)):

Then we worked with Arts & Parks and they did murals, did a beautiful mural on both sides and also Larry Poncho. And he did two murals on the back. So definitely come and see. You'll be totally amazed by what you see as we begin to continue to work on this project. So that's one of my most pride and joy as well as we created the banners in the business district that says, try Pimlico, Pimlico merchant Association, again, the partners with healthy neighbors and Northwest faith-based community church. And then we had these beautiful flower pots that Whitney Frazier beautifully painted, and we had flower pots and mirrors on the front of, now, this is all happening in the front of the businesses, the front of the corridor, 5100 block of Park Heights, and the Pimlico Community Garden is in the back of where the business district is.

Speaker 2 ([03:48](#)):

And how, and why do you do this work? Like how do you get the inspiration? How do you stay motivated?

Yeshiyah Israel ([03:59](#)):

How and why? That's a very good question, because that was one of my, one of my meditative thoughts. How and why? I would say the how is I saw a community that was definitely unique from what I'm used to seeing in the business district. That was the how, the why I felt that I have been groomed and prepped in so many ways that I was capable and able of completing this particular task. So therefore moving forward, it was a passion for me to move forward, to make things happen. And then sometimes you are chosen to be at a particular place at a particular time and this was one of my areas to be here, understanding protocol and what protocol mean and understanding leadership and understanding different roles that I have learned in my growth and development from of the folks that have groomed and prepped me.

Yeshiyah Israel ([05:04](#)):

I felt that I was best fit and best chosen because when we look at things from a spiritual point. To come here, I was like, well, are you sure God is me? You want me to be here? And so as other people begin to come into the space, I'll continue to say, Pastor Terrye Moore, she's like, she was like that light to help me to move it forward. So I would see myself as being a light to the community. If there's something wrong, something happened, they could feel free to knock on my door and I will always find a way. So I'm like a resource person for the community.

Yeshiyah Israel ([05:41](#)):

So other community members may not have had the education or may not be computer savvy or any of those areas. So therefore I'm utilized for that in that way. So that's, I could say that I would be considered a role model, a beacon of light, a savior, all of those things that I've been blessed to let be a part of my character. I feel that I am a God fearing kind of woman. So being that my heart and my passion is for the help and for the salvation of the people.

Speaker 2 ([06:18](#)):

And where are we sitting right now? We're in your store on Park Heights avenue. But how did you get here to this store?

Yeshiyah Israel ([06:30](#)):

Well, this is a family business. My father William Scott created the store, Scott & Sons furniture store. You hear that Scotts & Sons and daughter was not in the equation, but it was okay. I wasn't in the country. So time has moved on. I relocated back into the country, relocated back into Baltimore and I started producing and manufacturing and selling African culture boutique fashion. So therefore half of the half of the store, the store split in half, one, half is furniture. And the other half is the boutique African culture. So my father's been here for like 20 something years, 20 plus more years. He's part of the bricks and everything else around. And the, everyone that's my peer has now grown up. So he's seen those children as children. So they know him, they know Mr. Scott, they know Mr. Scott is he don't take any kind of crap from anybody. Everybody know he's as crazy as they are crazy.

Speaker 2 ([07:39](#)):

And how have you seen your neighborhood change over the last 10 years? And what do you want to still work on or see change or improve?

Yeshiyah Israel ([07:51](#)):

How I'm seeing the neighborhood change by working with the Pimlico Golden Garden and bringing, raising the bar, raised the bar to the community, by working with various partnerships, which I've shared Baltimore business development, which is one of the, also the partnerships and healthy neighbors and couple of other organizations, again, just have anchored in and say, well, she needs help. Let's help her. Let's help her develop this particular area. Moving forward, Pimlico race track will be developed. I was able to go to Annapolis and hear about the legislation going on. And as you begin to hear, they was granted so many funds of millions of dollars, as well as Park High's Renaissance was granted so many funds of dollars. And so therefore the vision moving forward is to have a cleaner, greener, safer it's important to have. It's important to have beautiful houses. As I shared with Senator Haynes, it's important to have beautiful houses, but along with the beautiful houses, people need to feel safe and they need to feel comfortable to move back into the city and to move back into this particular area.

Yeshiyah Israel ([09:11](#)):

So moving forward, I see trees trimmed, more trash cans, more mirrors, more color of culture, and just people feeling comfortable to walk from their house to walk in the 5100 block of Park Heights. And just to even sit outside and dine and eat, I look at a Pimlico Market Cafe, a cafe, whereas people could come and just sit outside and eat and just in a host of environment. Whereas other particular communities in Baltimore, whether you live in Federal Hill, whether you're in Fells Point or whether you are in Hampton, those are very popular business district. So I want to see this business district flourish as the other business districts flourish in Baltimore city.

Speaker 2 ([10:03](#)):

And what do you want others to know about your neighborhood or this particular block or community? Let's say you're talking to someone that's not even from Baltimore. Hasn't ever been to Park Heights?

Yeshiyah Israel ([10:22](#)):

I would say come and explore a community that is up and coming and growing. Because as I begin to one thing I like to back up and say, I do fashion shows and I do conventions outside of Baltimore, national conventions, 500 people, 2,500 people. So I'm always promoting my store. My stores located at 5115 Park Heights Avenue is located near the famous Pimlico Racetrack. So I'm always promoting to people to come to the area to come and to shop and what's important is that there's a idea it's called one Park Heights. People always want to divide the division or put a division between Northern Parkway and across Northern Parkway. But we want to bring the division to be one division, whether you're Jewish, whether you African American, whether you're Russian, whether you are Indian, whether you're from Pakistan saying it's one Park Heights. So we look at that one Park Heights idea to begin to help flourish and begin to help it to grow so that we all could be in unity because we all have one common goal. And the common goal is safety and cleanliness. That's the common goal.

Speaker 2 ([11:34](#)):

One thing I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I find really intriguing about this neighborhood is how many different cultures there are, right? And cultural foods, clothing.

Yeshiyah Israel ([11:49](#)):

Yes. [crosstalk 00:11:50] the various cultures in the community. This is a multicultural community, the multicultural community there's called the Caribbean community, the Caribbean community you want some Jamaican food we have three Jamaican restaurants. There's one restaurant that's a Trinidad, Trinidadian restaurant. Then we have the mom and pop stores. Then we have the soul food, soul food restaurants. Then we have two boutiques in the area as well as a car dealership. So if you want to buy a car, you want to go to the dentist. You want to go to two 21st century schools that are walking distance from one another. If you want to go and play some numbers at the casino, well, not a casino, but I'm sure it's going to go into that. But if you want to go and play numbers there, if you want to, whatever you like to do is in this particular area in this and in this neighborhood so this is going to be a very active place.

Yeshiyah Israel ([12:58](#)):

One would want to come and live. And then Whitney wanted to say in reference of passion, I say, I'm passionate about helping people that need help. I am passionate about bringing joy and positive to a unique, in a unique situation. And the people in the community see me as a hard worker and dedicated stand focused and looking at the bigger picture and the betterment of the lives and the surroundings as well as the children. So we, I work with the children in the community, which you're going to be meeting. I work with them under BMORE Beautiful Baltimore program. So therefore they live in the community once upon a time children grow up and they would have allowance.

Yeshiyah Israel ([13:41](#)):

So therefore allowance is a good word to say, but I don't think that exists too much right now. So moving forward, so children can have something in their pocket that they could go to movies and go and eat and go with friends. And so therefore Youth Works is a program that was established in Baltimore city and I, and Pastor Terrye Moore, we have worked with Youth Works for over three years and we've had a total of 20 youth and that's how you groomed them and prepped him to be leaders and groomed him and prepped him to be business orientated and to be prepared for work.

Speaker 2 ([14:20](#)):

Are there other female leaders that come to mind that are like-minded or that we should be hearing their stories as well?

Yeshiyah Israel ([14:31](#)):

Who comes to mind? First leader would again, Pastor Terrye Moore. I met pastor Terrye Moore when it was Freddy Gray and it was the unrest and we were standing across the street together and she came on this block of making sure that nothing didn't happen. And it was just a lot going on in Baltimore at that time. And so she discovered my role where I was, what I do. And I was, again, just the new person, the new kid on the block, just the new kid, just in the overall area. So I didn't really know anybody too much. I just was fashion beauty fashion shows, leaving the city, catching a plane fashion shows. And that kind of, sort of was my window. But as I began to be at the store more and begin to see the things that I could do to help Pastor Terrye Moore was there.

Yeshiyah Israel ([15:23](#)):

She did a day called the prayer day, the day of prayer. And we, I supported her in the day of prayer and then did work with another young lady. And we had food giveaways and we fed a thousand people in the food giveaways and three months, a thousand people we fed. And so being a pastor and a doctor, she came out of her church and knew that there was a need to help the community. We did several pro. We even had a popup job fair. So we're like, what can we do to help the people? Because the people kind of like they are there because there's no other choice or they may have other choices, but we want to help them in other ways, because they have entrepreneurship. We can see that. So they have leadership skills. We can see that. So we created a popup job fair.

Yeshiyah Israel ([16:20](#)):

We created a summer in the park summer in the summer health fair, which we had everything for children, for families, for high blood pressure. We do annual toy drives. And we have it at various churches where we have the toys. We talk to them about the Kwanza or the cultures and they dance and they play and they eat and we give them all of these beautiful gifts. And we work with LifeBridge because they also donate to us as well. So we've had several projects together that has helped us. She's been the closest friend with all out of all the churches she's been like the one that's been there for me the most and that have held my hand. And that has been my voice. And when I need to write a letter, she would edit the letter like you share this too much.

Yeshiyah Israel ([17:14](#)):

So therefore I may want to like run off and she'd be like, no, let's say it this way. You know? So again, some things are delicate and some things are sensitive and we do have to be sensitive to other people's feelings because of the sensitivity of the area and the sensitivity of the community. I would love for the community to change from a red zone district, to a district of one park height where people could come and enjoy one another, regardless of your faith, regardless of your identity, we just want to be together. And we just want to eat together and work together in peace in love in joy.

Speaker 2 ([18:00](#)):

Beautiful. I kind of asked you this, but I still it's a mystery to me, with you and all the other women I'm interviewing, but like what keeps you going? Like how do you have all this energy and all this path, and I'm sure there are moments where you don't feel so hopeful and like, what do you do to pick yourself up or?

Yeshiyah Israel ([18:19](#)):

I could truly say that it's my lifestyle, which is one, I'm a vegan. My other hat, I'm a food service manager. And that was my other hat I wore before I came into fashion. So therefore a wholesome lifestyle is at the top of my list, healthy eating, healthy lifestyle, being around people that are healthy, health minded will say that because there is people that are toxic. So negativity, toxic people I don't engage in my space. Yes, they may be around, but they may not have to be in my space. So meditation is always good. And traveling, you have to leave the city, you have to get on a plane. You have to get in the car.

Yeshiyah Israel ([19:12](#)):

Okay. If you don't get on a plane, don't get in the car. Don't get in the train. Okay. Take a walk in the park, go to one of the parks and listen to the water flow. You have to always continuously open up your mind for beauty. You have to always be prayerful. You have to begin to center yourself, center to your mind and have to do those holistic kind of things because what's so important is a peace of mind. It's nothing money can't buy a peace of mind and a peace of mind is an absolute.