

Interview with Dr. Hedley LENNAN  
INTERVIEWER:  
Interviewee(s): Dr. Hedley LENNAN  
Year of Birth:  
Location of Interview: Panama  
Language of Interview: English

**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Hedley LENNAN August 19, 2008. All right, thank you so much again for agreeing to participate in this project. It will surely benefit the community both here in Panama and abroad. The goal of the questionnaire is to get as comprehensive your story as possible. So feel free to tell us as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing. We know that you have signed a consent form already giving us permission to use this, but if you change your mind at any time you can feel free to do so as well. And we will be using the materials from this interview and all the others we are doing for educational exhibits and presentations. Okay, why don't we go ahead and start. Okay, tell me about your place of birth and what was going on there as you were growing up. Where were you born?

**LENNAN:** La Boca, Panama.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what was going on as a young, young child in La Boca.

**LENNAN:** What was going on? What boys do, play and fight, and tried to pass from school. You go to school and come home, you go out and play and get so tired you go to bed. And on the weekends, it was the same thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you play?

**LENNAN:** Basketball, football, baseball, a little bit of all of those.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did you play these? Was there a park nearby or at the school?

**LENNAN:** No, right under the house, and the park...

**INTERVIEWER:** What are the fondest memories you have from that childhood?

**LENNAN:** I would say sticking to my mother, especially with your grandmother and your other ladies were concerned. They learned from her, and I was around them, one lap to the other, lap to the other lap. That was my function, to run errands.

**INTERVIEWER:** So running errands for mom and her friends?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, and a little mischief in between.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Who were your best friends, and where were their parents from?

**LENNAN:** I didn't have any best friends actually. I had friends and acquaintances I associated with...but to have a closeness, no, I didn't have that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, are you still friends with those friends today?

**LENNAN:** No, only one. Yeah, only one, I can remember.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where were your friends' parents from? Were they West Indian also? Were they are mixture?

**LENNAN:** Barbados, yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, Barbados?

**LENNAN:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, let's go through the list of origins. I want you to tell me about your parents, grandparents, where they were from, and how did they come to be in Panama. So you can tell me your father's origin, your mother's origin, then your paternal grandparents and maternal grandparents.

**LENNAN:** Well, my mother and father, they are both from Jamaica. My father came during the time when the cane fields in Cuba were flourishing. And then most of Jamaicans went here to work in the cane field. Then when that started to subside, they all came to Panama so...

**INTERVIEWER:** What about their parents? Where are your paternal grandparents from?

**LENNAN:** From Jamaica, too.

**INTERVIEWER:** And maternal grandparents as well?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, do you remember what year they came to Panama? What were their professions? Father's profession, mother's profession, and then grandparent's profession. I know you mentioned they worked in the cane fields.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Once they came to Panama, what profession did they follow?

**LENNAN:** Well, in Jamaica, my father was a foundry man. What that meant doing, what it is, I don't know. It was teaching the students... There was nothing professional about it. When he came here, it made sense because the canal was in process, and they had a lot of foundry work so he used to dig in the foundry in Balboa.

**INTERVIEWER:** How about your mother?

**LENNAN:** My mother, all her life, was a domestic.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, your grandparents, do you remember their professions?

**LENNAN:** My grandmother was also domestic.

**INTERVIEWER:** From your father's side or your mother's side?

**LENNAN:** Mother's side. From my father's side, I don't know too much about her. I only saw her once in her lifetime.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what about the grandfathers on either side?

**LENNAN:** My grandfather was a pretty boy. (laughs)

**INTERVIEWER:** A pretty boy?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Your father's father or your—

**LENNAN:** No, my mother's—pretty boy.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, now what about on your father's side, your father's father?

**LENNAN:** I don't know much about him.

**INTERVIEWER:** Who are your parents and grandparents' friends? What are the memories you have visiting them? And what sorts of things do you remember them doing, eating, drinking, talking about during those visits? I know you mentioned you used to do errands for your mom's friends. What other things would you do like that for them?

**LENNAN:** Well, my father's side, he was more a fraternity specialist. He was a founder of Jamaican society, so he had a lot of civic duties going on all the time. And he belonged to so many lodges, and he was president of all of them. But that's what he was. He wants to be in front, and they put him there, too.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Okay, now—

**LENNAN:** And my grandfather, he was a big racehorse fan. He lived at the racetrack. That's why I say he was a—

**INTERVIEWER:** Pretty boy?

**LENNAN:** Pretty boy, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was school like? How and who were your teachers, and what do you remember about your time as a school child? Do you have any favorite teachers you can talk about?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, my most favorite teacher was a German admiral.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember his name?

**LENNAN:** Yes, his name was Goldwater. No, Goldberg... Goldberg... You don't get the first one right, never. But it was Goldberg.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, and how did he come to Panama? What was he doing in Panama?

**LENNAN:** Why he came here?

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh. Do you know?

**LENNAN:** Born.

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, he was born here?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, in La Boca.

**INTERVIEWER:** Why was he a good teacher?

**LENNAN:** He can...

**INTERVIEWER:** What was the cultural and racial background of your classmates and of your teachers? Were they all West Indian? Were they a mix of American and West Indian?

**LENNAN:** Which classes, speaking of secondary, primary or—

**INTERVIEWER:** All of them. I guess it might have varied from primary then secondary and so forth. So how was primary?

**LENNAN:** Primary was regular, a lot of colored kids, a lot of them Jamaican. You know how extensive that would be.

**INTERVIEWER:** How about secondary?

**LENNAN:** About the same.

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh. Mostly West Indian?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** What schools did you go for primary and secondary?

**LENNAN:** Primary, I started in La Boca... and I eight, nine years, and then we went to Jamaica, and then we went to elementary there and finished elementary.

**INTERVIEWER:** How many years did you live in Jamaica then as a kid?

**LENNAN:** We were there eight years.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then you came back to Panama and continued secondary in Panama?

**LENNAN:** Not exactly. I finished in Jamaica secondary. When I came to Panama, I got a job, and I started to work. Then it's from there that I springboard to the United States.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Now, what about your teacher's background? You have primary in Panama, La Boca, in Jamaica, then where? La Boca was mostly West Indian teachers?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, yeah, La Boca teachers.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you have any English teachers at all in Jamaica, from England directly?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, yeah, Goldberg was. Goldberg and ... was German. He spoke a lot of English. He talked in English.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Okay, now, what type of music did you grow up hearing, and what were your favorite singers and your favorite song?

**LENNAN:** I didn't know too much about music, but I play the trumpet.

**INTERVIEWER:** What kind of songs did you like to play on the trumpet?

**LENNAN:** Jazz.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you like any particular jazz singer or jazz musicians?

**LENNAN:** No, no, no.

**INTERVIEWER:** Didn't know—

**LENNAN:**...And they teach you to slur and do all the maneuvers.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, can you play the trumpet today?

**LENNAN:** I don't know.

**INTERVIEWER:** Can't remember?

**LENNAN:** I think I would remember. It would be flat, a little bit, not too much.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about today, what kind of music do you enjoy listening to today?

**LENNAN:** Reggae.

**INTERVIEWER:** Any particular artist?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, one name, the Beanie Man. I've heard him a couple of times, and I met him in Jamaica. Yeah, he gave my wife some records, too. We were in Montego Bay. We were spending two weeks up there, and then we saw this trailer with a truck, a lovely truck where he had all of these records in the back. And then my wife went to him and said, "What are you doing with all these records." And then he said, "Well, you know, ma'am, I am a singer, and I write songs." And he started to sing. I wanted to go so I told her I'd be back. And he gave her about two hours of records.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow.

**LENNAN:** He was the Beanie Man.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's quite a catch, yeah. That's good. Do you like to eat, and what are your favorite foods?

**LENNAN:** No, I don't like to eat. (laughs) My favorite food is ice cream.

**INTERVIEWER:** That counts. That counts. Ice cream.

**LENNAN:** But don't put ice cream. You put ice banana. (laughs) Creamy dessert.

**INTERVIEWER:** Of course.

**LENNAN:** It's the same thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about foods that your mother used to cook when you were growing up, do you remember what those were?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, there's a joke about when we lived in La Boca, we went to Xavier University, and we kept on getting the... favorite foods we have in Panama, and after he left, another Panamanian went there, and they started to talk about backus. So I said, "backus?" He said, "Yes, backus I didn't – they told us about backus. It meant... (laughs)

**INTERVIEWER:** That's pretty bad.

**LENNAN:** That's one of my favorite things.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So I take it that may be one of your favorites?

**LENNAN:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Do you know how to cook and bake?

**LENNAN:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. How about sayings, do you have any favorite sayings, and where do you remember hearing them from? These could be sayings that your mother said to you or that you said to your kids. How about that?

**LENNAN:** Well, the only one that I remember in the class... it's never too late to seek a new world, to push off. I remember that.

**INTERVIEWER:** It's never too late to seek?

**LENNAN:** A new world, to push off.

**INTERVIEWER:** To push off.

**LENNAN:** Push off.

**INTERVIEWER:** And that's from your literature class?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** In Jamaica?

**LENNAN:** No, at Bishop College.

**INTERVIEWER:** Have you ever heard of Louise Bennett or the Mighty Sparrow, and what thoughts come to mind when you hear their names? Have you seen them perform, and what do you remember about those performances, any words or lyrics?

**LENNAN:** Louise Bennett?

**INTERVIEWER:** Louise Bennett.

**LENNAN:** I know her, and she was in my class?

**INTERVIEWER:** No, she's a Jamaican.

**LENNAN:** That's another Louise Bennett.

**INTERVIEWER:** I don't know. Louise Bennett is a Jamaican poet.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** She had shows on the radio.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** She spoke in Creole.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And spoke for—do you remember hearing her?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, I knew her.

**INTERVIEWER:** You knew her?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, tell me about her?

**LENNAN:** She was in my classroom, but we weren't very close. But she was in a class with—

**INTERVIEWER:** She was in the same class with you at school?

**LENNAN:** Yes, yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** In Jamaica.

**LENNAN:** She was a folklore type of person.

**INTERVIEWER:** What do you remember about her? Maybe other people talking about her or what—

**LENNAN:** No, she was kind of an administrator for the YWCA at that time.

**INTERVIEWER:** YWCA?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And she was a folklore specialist you said, right?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you ever hear her show?

**LENNAN:** Once, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** What do you remember about her show?

**LENNAN:** Not a lot.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, what about the Mighty Sparrow?

**LENNAN:** Only by... I can't remember.

**INTERVIEWER:** Any particular lyrics or songs that you remember the most from him?

**LENNAN:** I have to go too far back. Too much displacement, you know.

**INTERVIEWER:** It happens.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay. Now, let's look into religion. What religion are you and what particular denomination?

**LENNAN:** Religion?

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh.

**LENNAN:** Christian. Episcopal.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is the role of religion in your life?

**LENNAN:** It's something I find controlling. It's controlling factor.

**INTERVIEWER:** How so?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, huh?

**INTERVIEWER:** How?

**LENNAN:** Many of the decisions I make come from the ethical Pastoral.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what is your favorite part of the worship service when you go to church?

**LENNAN:** That's difficult. You know why? Because I have a doctorate in Pastoral Counseling. So I cannot pick a particular part of the service, to isolate the flow of how good the performer performs, and that's bad. ... to disappoint. (laughs) Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So your doctorate you said was in Pastoral—

**LENNAN:** Counseling.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, and that means that you kind of look over the actual—

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:**—mass, sermons.

**LENNAN:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, so after looking at so many different sermons, you can't think of a certain part that you tend to prefer more?

**LENNAN:** No, nothing special.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you play sports as a child?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, football.

**INTERVIEWER:** Football, American football or soccer?

**LENNAN:** No, the English football. I did America, too, in college, but not much.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you still either play or actually just watch those sports on TV? Do you keep up with what's going on in soccer around the world?

**LENNAN:** No, American football—

**INTERVIEWER:** American.

**LENNAN:**—I keep very close to that. It's such a scientific game.

**INTERVIEWER:** How so? Why would you say that?

**LENNAN:** It teaches you how to arrange things so you can meet your goal. The men that are on the field, you move them around. And there's one coach that I keep remembering, is Joe Paterno, and he says that—he's a football coach. He said that, "In order to win the game, you have to get in the heads of your chosen players." That means you have to talk to them and see how they think, and once you know how they think, you know how they gotta play, and then you play to conquer that.

**INTERVIEWER:** It almost sounds like chess.

**LENNAN:** Huh?

**INTERVIEWER:** It almost sounds like chess.

**LENNAN:** Yeah, yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, did you have any culture—any contact, sorry, with United States culture as a youth, and what do you remember about that growing up in La Boca and so forth. When was your contact with US culture?

**LENNAN:** The truth is the contact that we had was superimposed and brought down from the south and applied here. And that was the type that we were exposed to made it resistant to certain things. Maybe that's the reason why many of us came out the way we came out because we struggled to get out.

**INTERVIEWER:** All right. Now, tell me about your view of your West Indian ancestry?

**LENNAN:** My view?

**INTERVIEWER:** Yes, how do you think of yourself in relation to your West Indian background?

**LENNAN:** I don't know, a survivor, I suppose...a survivor.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** So the next question is actually what's the first word that comes to mind when someone says West Indian? Would you say that is survival or would you think of another?

**LENNAN:** It gives me a sense of pride.

**INTERVIEWER:** And what qualities, cultural behaviors or other things do you associate with West Indian—being West Indian?

**LENNAN:** This Olympics brought it out. When we saw all three girls swimming 100 meters, one, two, three, and then you go over to the men and get the same feeling. And that's what we're about.

**INTERVIEWER:** This was when the three Jamaican women?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, and if you go and live on the island, you can see why that is the way it is because they are like that there.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, do you believe the people in Panama view or treat you differently based on your race or based on your being West Indian?

**LENNAN:** The thing there, is the people of Panama, when they meet you for the first time, they profile you. You see? And they teach according to the results of your profile. Meaning, for instance, I go to the hospital, when I'm around the doctors, they start to treat me as a regular person. Okay, if somebody comes up and says, "Hey, doc," then things change, things change. Then if it's a regular case that is on the ward, and somebody comes up and says, "Hey, I want you to take a look at this patient," things start to change because the profile is changing too, you see. Because you're not that other person any more, you're a special person. And then when you become that special person, you get more special when the environment changes, see? So I would not answer that one.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, I'm not gonna circle yes or no. I'm just gonna put that it's profiling.

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Depending on—

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** —what they're doing. All right. Have you lived outside of Panama for sometime?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** First in Jamaica as a kid, right?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** And then you lived in the U.S., you said?

**LENNAN:** In Dallas.

**INTERVIEWER:** So Jamaica was eight years, and Dallas was how long?

**LENNAN:** Four.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, did you feel that people in the U.S. treated you differently because of your race, being West Indian or even being Panamanian?

**LENNAN:** No, being West Indian.

**INTERVIEWER:** How? What circumstances?

**LENNAN:** They see that when you come from Jamaica, you're brilliant. The Americans have that feeling that you are there because you are brilliant.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did they feel about Panamanians or did they not see you as a Panamanian?

**LENNAN:** Yes, they do if you're in New York, but if you're in other parts of the United States, they don't look at you that way.

**INTERVIEWER:** Now, what do the people you encounter in either Jamaica or the U.S. know about Panamanians or about Panamanians and West Indian descent?

**LENNAN:** The people in where?

**INTERVIEWER:** In Jamaica or the U.S., in Dallas?

**LENNAN:** In Jamaica, they look up to you, especially the Indian because they speak Spanish, you see? That's a type of black.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about the U.S.?

**LENNAN:** In the U.S., you have to gain that. In the U.S. you have to gain that position, earn it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did they know about Panama, the people you met in the U.S.? Did they know about Panama and—

**LENNAN:** No. It seems that in the U.S., they don't know much about geography because they group the Jamaicans and Panamanians and Barbadians all as one group. See?

**INTERVIEWER:** How do you think living outside of Panama, living abroad, has affected your views of yourself as a Panamanian?

**LENNAN:** Living?

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh.

**LENNAN:** You mean over a period of time or—

**INTERVIEWER:** Exactly.

**LENNAN:** For periods?

**INTERVIEWER:** The fact that you leave Panama, you live somewhere else and then come back. How did that affect your own view of yourself as a Panamanian? Do you consider yourself more or less Panamanian? Does it affect how you see yourself as a Panamanian?

**LENNAN:** Well, I never really think of myself as being Panamanian. I just—being black. Because Jamaican, Panamanian or whatever, you're still black.

**INTERVIEWER:** What about how the other Panamanians look at you after you went away and came back? Do they look at you any different?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, they look up to you. They look up to you.

**INTERVIEWER:** And how is your relationship with African-Americans and their visit to the U.S.?

**LENNAN:** I seem to mix pretty good with that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, how has knowing English affected you, whether positively or negatively?

**LENNAN:** In Panama?

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh.

**LENNAN:** Oh, yes, it's positive, definitely.

**INTERVIEWER:** How so? Why?

**LENNAN:** I had a professor of surgery that when he gave his class, I could refer to certain journals concerning various teachings, and then when I remarked, he realized that I know about history, knowing English because I read the articles that are in English and only English so they respect me more...

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, all right. You're married, and how did you meet your wife?

**LENNAN:** (laughs) I'll let her answer that one.

**INTERVIEWER:** I was gonna compare your answers. (laughs) You sure you don't wanna give your version?

**LENNAN:** Her mother was my grandmother, and I'm supposed to tell you the same thing, right? And her mother was...my mother very good. She's gonna tell the same thing, they overlap.

**INTERVIEWER:** That's fine, that's fine, that's fine. Okay, do you remember where—see, this is now adding. Do you remember where you were when you first met her?

**LENNAN:** Where I was? Yes, at my mother's circle.

**INTERVIEWER:** Wow, A+ okay, all right. Okay, do you have children? Tell me a little bit about them, and their lives and their jobs?

**LENNAN:** They're all nice children. Seem to be obedient and disciplined.

**INTERVIEWER:** Anything else?

**LENNAN:** One is in overdrive, and the other one is in drive. One is the studying type, and the other one get along, that type.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, okay. Do they consider themselves Panamanian, West Indian, both or something else?

**LENNAN:** They consider themselves American, now...Panamanian.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do your children speak English, and your grandchildren, do they all speak English?

**LENNAN:** Yes, the children speak English, and the grandchildren are now being exposed...

**INTERVIEWER:** Why do you think your children speak English? Was that also your insistence growing up, making sure that they know both Spanish and English, you just said for your children?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, they went to school and then they speak Spanish.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, do you have any other family that lives overseas?

**LENNAN:** My aunt.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where does she live?

**LENNAN:** New York.

**INTERVIEWER:** When they come to Panama, when your aunt comes to Panama, do other kind of Indians see her as less Panamanian or more American?

**LENNAN:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** She's seen as Panamanian?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Yeah, okay. When did you live in Dallas? This was when you were going to school?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, 40, 41.

**INTERVIEWER:** Forties.

**LENNAN:** Forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight.

**INTERVIEWER:** What was your experience like in the U.S. overall?

**LENNAN:** It was good, I would say. Nothing too problematic.

**INTERVIEWER:** How would you say your experience was in terms of what people seem to know about Panamanians or about Panamanian West Indians? If you were to separate just that aspect of your experience, how would you say it was?

**LENNAN:** They knew very little.

**INTERVIEWER:** So they were pretty much learning through you?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, now, we're almost finished. What specific message do you want to communicate to the younger generation?

**LENNAN:** What message?

**INTERVIEWER:** Uh huh. If you could give them a message, what would it be?

**LENNAN:** My message would be my favorite saying.

**INTERVIEWER:** Your saying?

**LENNAN:** Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER:** It's never too late to seek a new world, to push off.

**LENNAN:** Uh huh.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, are you involved with any community groups or organizations, and what role do you play in those groups?

**LENNAN:** Well, all of my organizations are in the medical field.

**INTERVIEWER:** Like which ones? Which medical organizations?

**LENNAN:** I am the Vice President of the Panamanian Geriatric Society, founder too.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, Vice President and founder.

**LENNAN:** Uh huh.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay.

**LENNAN:** Also, we have a group that is called in Spanish, Medico sin fronteras. It means doctors without boundaries.

**INTERVIEWER:** Anything else?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, just that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, no lodges?

**LENNAN:** Yeah, it's—

**INTERVIEWER:** Oh, okay. Okay, the last question is simply, is there any information that you want to include that we have not yet touched upon?

**LENNAN:** I can't think of any.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, well I have one more question though. How did you decide to go into the medical field?

**LENNAN:** (laughs) That wasn't a decision. That wasn't a decision. It's a kind of a peculiar thing. I was—when I came from Jamaica, I was an engineer, and I used to work in... as a architectural drafts... And then I got tired one day seeing... the life of looking for a job. I wanted something that I don't have to work alone, and asked for a job I liked for people to come to me, so I choose medicine.

**INTERVIEWER:** Okay, well, that's it. And I just want to thank you again for participating, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to add anything more.

## Dr. Hedley Lennan

.... = Unintelligible

*Italics* = Sounds like

I = Interviewer

H = Dr. Hedley Lennan

I: Dr. Hedley Lennan, August 19, 2008. All right, thank you so much again for agreeing to participate in this project. It will surely benefit the community, both here in Panama and abroad. The goal of the questionnaire is to get as comprehensive your story as possible, so feel free to tell us as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing. We know that you have signed a consent form already giving us permission to use this, but if you change your mind at any time you can feel free to do so as well. And we will be using the materials from this interview and all the others we are doing for educational exhibits and presentations.

Okay, why don't we go ahead and start. Okay, tell me about your place of birth and what was going on there as you were growing up. Where were you born?

H: La Boca, Panama.

I: And what was going on as a young, young child in La Boca?

H: What was going on? What boys do, play and fight, and tried to....from school. You go to school and come home, you go out and play and get so tired you go to bed. And on the weekends, it was the same thing.

I: What did you play?

H: Basketball, football, baseball, a little bit of all of those.

I: Where did you play these? Was there a park nearby or at the school?

H: No, right under the house, and the park....

I: What are the fondest memories you have from that childhood?

H: I would say sticking to my mother, especially with your grandmother and your other ladies were concerned. They learned from her, and

I was around them, one lap to the other, lap to the other lap. That was my function: to run errands.

I: So running errands for mom and her friends?

H: Yeah. And a little mischief in between.

I: All right. Who were your best friends, and where were their parents from?

H: I didn't have any best friends actually. I had friends and acquaintances I associated with frequently. But to have a closeness, no, I didn't have that.

I: Okay, are you still friends with those friends today?

H: No, only one. Yeah, only one, I can remember.

I: Where were your friends' parents from? Were they West Indian also? Were they a mixture?

H: Barbados, yes.

I: Oh, Barbados?

H: Yes.

I: Now, let's go through the list of origins. I want you to tell me about your parents, grandparents, where they were from, and how did they come to be in Panama. So you can tell me your father's origin, your mother's origin, and then your paternal grandparents and maternal grandparents.

H: Well, my mother and father, they are both from Jamaica. My father came during the time when the cane fields in Cuba were flourishing. And then most of Jamaicans went here to work in the cane field. Then when that started to subside, they all came to Panama.

I: What about their parents? Where are your paternal grandparents from?

H: From Jamaica.

I: And maternal grandparents as well?

H: Yeah.

I: Okay. Do you remember what year they came to Panama? What were their professions? Father's profession, mother's profession, and then grandparent's profession. I know you mentioned they worked in the cane fields.

H: Yeah.

I: Once they came to Panama, what profession did they follow?

H: Well, in Jamaica, my father was a foundry man. What that meant doing, what it is, I don't know. It was teaching the students....There was nothing professional about it. When he came here, it made sense because the canal was in process, and they had a lot of foundry work, so he used to dig in the foundry in....

I: How about your mother?

H: My mother, all her life, was....

I: Now, your grandparents, do you remember their professions?

H: My grandmother was also....

I: From your father's side or your mother's side?

H: Mother's side. From my father's side, I don't know too much about her. I only saw her once in her lifetime.

I: And what about the grandfathers on either side?

H: My grandfather was a pretty boy.

I: A pretty boy?

H: Yeah.

I: Your father's father or your?

I: No, my mother's father – pretty boy.

I: Okay, now what about on your father's side, your father's father?

H: I don't know much about him.

I: Who are your parents and grandparents' friends? What are the memories you have visiting them? And what sorts of things do you remember them doing, eating, drinking, talking about during those visits? I know you mentioned you used to do errands for your mom's friends. What other things would you do like that for them?

H: Well, my father's side, he was more a fraternity specialist. He was a founder of Jamaican society, so he had a lot of civic duties going on all the time. And he belonged to so many lodges, and he was president of all of them....But that's what....He wants to be in front. And they put him there, too.

I: All right. Okay, now –

H: And my grandfather, he was a big racehorse fan. He lived at the racetrack. That's why I say he was a –

I: Pretty boy?

H: Pretty boy, yeah.

I: What was school like? How and who were your teachers, and what do you remember about your time as a school child? Do you have any favorite teachers you can talk about?

H: Yeah, my most favorite teacher was a German admiral.

I: Do you remember his name?

H: Yes, his name was Goldwater. No, Goldberg....Goldberg....You don't get the first one right, never. But it was....Goldberg.

I: Okay, and how did he come to Panama? What was he doing in Panama?

H: Why he came here?

I: Uh huh. Do you know?

H: Born.

I: Oh, he was born here?

H: Yeah, in La Boca.

I: Why was he a good teacher?

H: He can....

I: What was the cultural and racial background of your classmates and of your teachers? Were they all West Indian? Were they a mix of American and West Indian?

H: Which classes, speaking of secondary, primary or –

I: All of them. I guess it might have varied from primary then secondary and so forth. So how was primary?

H: Primary was regular, a lot of colored kids, a lot of them Jamaican. You know how extensive that would be.

I: How about secondary?

H: About the same.

I: Uh huh. Mostly West Indian?

H: Yeah.

I: What schools did you go for primary and secondary?

H: Primary, I started in La Boca,....and I eight, nine years, and then we went to Jamaica, and then we went to elementary there and finished elementary.

I: How many years did you live in Jamaica then as a kid?

H: We were there eight years.

I: And then you came back to Panama and continued secondary in Panama?

H: Not exactly....in Jamaica secondary. When I came to Panama, I got a job, and I started to work. Then it's from there that I springboard to the United States.

I: All right. Now, what about your teachers' backgrounds? You have primary in Panama, La Boca, in Jamaica, then where? La Boca was mostly West Indian teachers?

H: Yeah, yeah, La Boca teachers.

I: Did you have any English teachers at all in Jamaica, from England directly?

H: Yeah, yeah, Goldberg was. Goldberg and....was German. He spoke a lot of English. He talked in English.

I: All right. Okay, now, what type of music did you grow up hearing, and what were your favorite singers and your favorite songs?

H: I didn't know too much about music, but I play the trumpet.

I: What kind of songs would you like to play on the trumpet?

H: Jazz.

I: Did you like any particular jazz singer or jazz musicians?

H: No, no, no.

I: Didn't know –

H: ....And they teach you to slur and do all the maneuvers.

I: Now, can you play the trumpet today?

H: I don't know.

I: Can't remember?

H: I think I would remember. It would be flat – a little bit, not too much.

I: What about today, what kind of music do you enjoy listening to today?

H: Reggae.

I: Any particular artist?

H: Yeah, one name, the Beanie Man. I've heard him a couple of times, and I met him in Jamaica. Yeah, he gave my wife some....We were in Montego Bay. We were spending two weeks up there, and then we saw this trailer with a truck, a....truck where he had all of these recordings in the back. And then my wife went to him and said, "What are you doing with all...."....And then he said, "Well, you know, ma'am, I am a singer, and I...." And he started to sing. I wanted to go.... And I....about two hours....

I: Wow.

H: ....he was the Beanie Man.

I: That's quite a couch, yeah. That's good. Do you like to eat, and what are you favorite foods?

H: No, I don't like to eat. My favorite food is ice cream.

I: That counts. That counts. Ice cream.

H: But don't put ice cream. You put I....

I: Of course.

H: Creamy dessert.

I: Of course.

H: It's the same thing.

I: What about foods that your mother used to cook when you were growing up, do you remember what those were?

H: Yeah, there's a joke about when we lived in La Boca, we went to....University, and we kept on getting the....favorite foods we have in Panama, and after he left, another Panamanian went there, and they started to talk about....So I said, "....?" He said, "Yes,...." I didn't – they told us about.... It meant....

I: That's pretty bad.

H: That's one of my favorite....

I: All right. When you know....

H: Yeah.

I: *Backache*.

H: Yes, *backache*.

I: So I take it that may be one of your favorites?

H: Yes.

I: All right. Do you know how to cook and bake?

H: No.

I: All right. How about sayings, do you have any favorite sayings, and where do you remember hearing them from? These could be sayings that your mother said to you or that you said to your kids. How about that?

H: Well, the only one that I remember in the class in English: "It's never too late to seek a new world to push off...."

I: It's never too late to seek?

H: A new world to push off.

I: To push off.

H: Push off.

I: And that's from your literature class?

H: Yeah.

I: In Jamaica?

H: No, at Bishop College.

I: Have you ever heard of Louise Bennett or the Mighty Sparrow, and what thoughts come to mind when you hear their names? Have you seen them perform, and what do you remember about those performances, any words or lyrics?

H: Louise Bennett?

I: Louise Bennett.

H: I know her, and she was in my class.

I: No, she's a Jamaican.

H: That's another Louise Bennett.

I: I don't know. Louise Bennett is a Jamaican poet.

H: Yeah.

I: She had shows on the radio.

H: Yeah.

I: She spoke in Creole.

H: Yeah.

I: And spoke for – do you remember hearing her?

H: Yeah, I knew her.

I: You knew her?

H: Yeah.

I: Okay, tell me about her?

H: She was in my classroom, but we weren't very close. But she was in....

I: She was in the same class with you at school?

H: Yes, yes.

I: In Jamaica.

H: She was a folklore type of person.

I: What do you remember about her? Maybe other people talking about her or what –

H: No, she was kind of an administrator for the YWCA at that time.

I: YWCA?

H: Yeah.

I: And she was a folklore specialist you said, right?

H: Yeah.

I: Did you ever hear her show?

H: Once, yeah.

I: What do you remember about her show?

H: ....

I: Okay, what about the Mighty Sparrow?

H: Only by....I can't remember.

I: Any particular lyrics or songs that you remember the most from him?

H: ....I have to go too far back. Too much displacement.

I: It happens.

H: Yeah.

I: Okay. Now, let's look into religion. What religion are you and what particular denomination?

H: Religion?

I: Uh huh.

H: ....

I: What is the role of religion in your life?

H: It's something I find....

I: How so?

H: Yeah, huh?

I: How?

H: Many of the decisions I make come from the....

I: And what is your favorite part of the worship service when you go to church?

H: That's difficult. You know why? Because I have a doctorate in Pastoral Counseling. So I cannot pick....which part of the service, to isolate the flow of good....and that's bad....Yeah.

I: So your doctorate you said was in Pastoral –

H: Counseling.

I: Okay, and that means that you kind of look over the actual –

H: Yeah.

I: – mass, sermons.

H: Yes.

I: Okay, so after looking at so many different sermons, you can't think of a certain part that you tend to prefer more?

H: No, nothing special.

I: Did you play sports as a child?....

H: Yeah, football.

I: Football, American football or soccer?

H: No, the English football. I did American....., but not much.

I: Do you still either play or actually just watch those sports on TV? Do you keep up with what's going on in soccer around the world?

H: No, American football –

I: American.

H: – I keep very close to that. It's such a scientific game.

I: How so? Why would you say that?

H: It teaches you how to arrange things so you can meet your goal. The men that are on the field, you move them around. And there's one coach that I keep remembering, is Joe Paterno, and he says that – he's a football coach. He said that, "In order to win the game, you have to get in the heads of your chosen players." That means you have to talk to them and see how they think, and once you know how they think, you know how they got to play, and then you play to conquer that.

I: It almost sounds like chess.

H: Huh?

I: It almost sounds like chess.

H: Yeah, yeah.

I: Okay, did you have any culture – any contact, sorry, with United States culture as a youth, and what do you remember about that, growing up in La Boca and so forth. What was your contact with US culture?

H: The truth is the contact that we had was superimposed and brought down from the south and applied here. And that...that we were exposed to made it resistant to certain things. Maybe that's the reason why many of us came out the way we came out because we struggled to get out.

I: All right. Now, tell me about your view of your West Indian ancestry?

H: My view?

I: Yes, how do you think of yourself in relation to your West Indian background?

H: I don't know, a survivor, I suppose. Maybe a survivor.

I: Okay.

H: Yeah.

I: So the next question is actually what's the first word that comes to mind when someone says West Indian? Would you say that is "survival" or would you think of another?

H: It gives me a sense of pride.

I: And what qualities, cultural behaviors or other things do you associate with West Indian – being West Indian?

H: This Olympics brought it...When we saw all three girls winning the 100 meters, one, two, three, and then you go over to the men and get the same feeling. And that's what....

I: This was when the three Jamaican women....?

H: Yeah, and if you go and live on the island, you can see why that is the way it is because they are like that there.

I: Now, do you believe the people in Panama view or treat you differently based on your race or based on your being West Indian?

H: The thing there is, the people of Panama, when they meet you for the first time, they profile you. You see? And then they teach according to the results of your profile. Meaning, for instance, I go to the hospital, when I'm around the doctors, they start to treat me as a regular person. Okay, if somebody comes up and says, "Hey, doc," then things change, things change. Then if it's a regular case that is on the ward, and somebody comes up and says, "Hey, I want you to take a look at this patient," things start to change because the profile is changing too, you see. Because you're not that other person any more, you're a special person. And then when you become that special person, you get more special when the environment changes, see? So I would....

I: Okay, I'm not gonna circle yes or no. I'm just gonna put that it's profiling.

H: Yeah.

I: Depending on –

H: Yeah.

I: – what they're doing. All right. Have you lived outside of Panama for sometime?

H: Yeah.

I: First in Jamaica as a kid, right?

H: Yeah.

I: And then you lived in the U.S., you said?

H: In Dallas.

I: So Jamaica was eight years, and Dallas was how long?

H: Four.

I: Okay. Did you feel that people in the U.S. treated you differently because of your race, being West Indian, or even being Panamanian?

H: No, being West Indian.

I: How? What circumstances?

H: They see that when you come from Jamaica, you're brilliant. The Americans have that feeling that you are there because you are brilliant.

I: How did they feel about Panamanians? Or did they not see you as a Panamanian?

H: Yes, they do if you're in New York, but if you're in other parts of the United States, they don't look at you that way.

I: Now, what do the people you encounter in either Jamaica or the U.S. know about Panamanians or about Panamanians and West Indian....?

H: The people in where?

I: In Jamaica or the U.S., in Dallas?

H: In Jamaica, they look up to you, especially the Indian because they speak Spanish, you see? That's a type of....

I: What about the U.S.?

H: In the U.S., you have to gain that. In the U.S. you have to gain that position, earn it.

I: Did they know about Panama, the people you met in the U.S.? Did they know about Panama and –

H: No. It seems that in the U.S., they don't know much about geography because they group the Jamaicans and Panamanians and Barbadians all as one group.

I: How do you think living outside of Panama, living abroad, has affected your views of yourself as a Panamanian?

H: Living?

I: Uh huh.

H: You mean over a period of time or –

I: Exactly.

H: ....periods.

I: The fact that you leave Panama, you live somewhere else, and then come back. How did that affect your own view of yourself as a Panamanian? Do you consider yourself more or less Panamanian? Does it affect how you see yourself as a Panamanian?

H: Well, I never really think of myself as being Panamanian. I just – being black, you know? Because Jamaican, Panamanian or whatever, you're still black.

I: What about how the other Panamanians look at you after you went away and came back? Do they look at you any different?

H: Yeah, they look up to you. They look up to you.

I: And how is your relationship with African-Americans and their visit to the U.S.?

H: ....?

I: Exactly.

H: I think....seem to mix pretty good with that.

I: Okay, how has knowing English affected you, whether positively or negatively?

H: In Panama?

I: Uh huh.

H: Oh, yes, it's equality....

I: How so? Why?

H: I had a professor of surgery that, when he gave his class, I could refer to certain journals concerning....teaching, and then when I

remarked, he realized that I know about history knowing English because....the articles that are in English, and only English, so they respect....

I: Okay, all right. You're married, and how did you meet your wife?

H: I'll let her answer that one.

I: I was gonna compare your answers.

H: ....

I: You sure you don't want to give your version.

H: Her mother was my grandmother, and I'm supposed to tell you the same thing, right? And her mother was....my mother very good. She's gonna tell you the same thing....

I: That's fine, that's fine, that's fine. Okay, do you remember where – see, this is now me adding. Do you remember where you were when you first met her?

H: Where I was? Yes, at my mother's....

I: Wow, A+ okay, all right. Okay, do you have children? Tell me a little bit about them, and their lives, and their jobs?

H: They're all nice children. Seem to be obedient and disciplined.

I: Anything else?

H: One is in overdrive, and the other one is in drive. One is the studying type, and the other one get along, that type.

I: Okay, okay. Do they consider themselves Panamanian, West Indian, both or something else?

H: ....American....

I: Do your children speak English, and your grandchildren, do they all speak English?

H: Yes, she does speak English, and the grandchildren are now being exposed....

I: Why do you think your children speak English?...your insistence growing up, making sure that they know both Spanish and English, like you just said for your children,....?

H: Yeah, they went to school and then they speak Spanish.

I: Okay, do you have any other family that lives overseas?

H: My aunt.

I: Where does she live?

H: New York.

I: When they come to Panama, when your aunt comes to Panama, do other kind of Indians see her as less Panamanian or more American?

H: No.

I: She's seen as Panamanian?

H: Yeah.

I: Yeah, okay. When did you live in Dallas? This was when you were going to school?

H: Yeah, forty, forty-one.

I: Forties.

H: Forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight.

I: What was your experience like in the U.S. overall?

H: It was good, I would say....

I: How would you say your experience was in terms of what people seem to know about Panamanians or about Panamanian West Indians? If you were to separate just that aspect of your experience, how would you say it was?

H: They knew very....

I: Okay, so they were pretty much learning through you?

H: Yeah.

I: Okay, now, we're almost finished. What specific message do you want to communicate to the younger generation?

H: What message?

I: Uh huh. If you could give them a message, what would it be?

H: My message would be my favorite statement.

I: Your saying?

H: Yeah.

I: "It's never too late to seek a new world to push off."

H: Uh huh.

I: Okay, are you involved with any community groups or organizations, and what role do you play in those groups?

H: Well, all of my organizations are in the medical field.

I: Like which ones? Which medical organizations?

H: I am the Vice President of the Panamanian Geriatric Society, founder, too.

I: Okay, Vice President and founder.

H: Uh huh.

I: Okay.

H: Also, we have a group that is called in Spanish, Medicos sin Fronteras. It means "doctors without boundaries."

I: Anything else?

H: Yeah, just that.

I: Okay, no lodges?

H: Yeah, it's –

I: Oh, okay. Okay, the last question is simply, is there any information that you want to include that we have not yet touched upon?

H: I can't think of any.

I: Okay, well I have one more question though. How did you decide to go into the medical field?

H: That wasn't a decision. That wasn't a decision. It's a kind of a peculiar thing. I was, when I came from Jamaica, I was an engineer, and I used to work in....as an architectural draftmaker. And then I got tired one day seeing...., the life of looking for a job. I wanted something that I don't have to work alone, and asked for a job I liked for people to come to me, so I choose medicine.

I: Okay, well, that's it. And I just want to thank you again for participating, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you wish to add anything more.

H: Okay.