

# CATCH da FLAVA

REGENT PARK NEWS MAGAZINE  
MAY JUNE 2007 VOLUME 12 ISSUE 4



ART

QUEEN WEST GRAFFITI

TATTOOS

REGGAE MUSIC

REGENT PARK RE-ENVISIONED

THE MUSEUM PROJECT

**VOLUME 12 ISSUE 4**  
**MAY / JUNE 2007**



The Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts centre is committed to using community-based media to promote health and engage youth. Regent Park Focus is home to: Catch da Flava Youth magazine, Catch da Flava Online, Catch da Flava Youth Radio on CKLN 88.1 FM, RPTV, The Zapparoli Studio for Photography, & The Underground Music Recording Studio

**LET CATCH DA FLAVA  
BE YOUR VOICE**

**CATCH DA FLAVA** youth magazine is published by the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Centre. The magazine is distributed free to libraries, community groups, and selected schools across downtown Toronto.

**CATCH DA FLAVA** welcomes letters and articles from young people (up to 24 years of age).

Submissions should be

**NO LONGER THAN 1000  
WORDS IN LENGTH.**

If you would like more information about how you can contribute to

**CATCH DA FLAVA**,

call us at **(416) 863-1074**

or submit directly to

**FOCUSFLAVA@GMAIL.COM**

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# EDITOR'S DESK:

**W**e all experience art within our daily routines. We stand for O Canada, dodge sidewalk drawings and choose from decorative menu signs. Although a lot of our surrounding visual culture is composed of what we might like to call design, theoretical lines that distinguish the two fields are blurring ever more. Clothing designers for example, would defend their position as artists, and in the publishing of a band's myspace page, the artist is given the role of the designer. Regardless of how we try to classify it, or what boundaries we try to impose on it, our culture is built on graphic, sonic, ritual, architectural, commercial, and fun forms of personal expression. That is what this issue is about. To make it easy for everyone, we called it the ART ISSUE.

Toronto's been getting into it. Remember the moose thing? This September the downtown core was turned into one huge gallery by Nuit Blanche, and the Luminato festival pulled the public into places like the TD building to experience installation pieces that many people wouldn't otherwise have seen. There are banners all over the city hanging from streetlights recruiting Toronto to "live with culture." I don't know what that's supposed to mean, and I have my own ideas about their prominence in the financial district and other newly "revitalized" hot spots. What do they mean to you? If culture is such an open category, does Toronto's cultural campaign have any limits? What about graffiti? And if culture is such an open ended question, what do you have to say?

Apparently the city has decided that graffiti doesn't count, and a lot of business owners have launched an effort to "give graffiti the brush off." Graffiti is a hot issue because it is so closely tied to the historical argument about what is art. Graffiti is also arguably the art form people are confronted with the most in urban areas, whether it is being painted on the side of your store, or being used as a backdrop for a photo of your friend. The graffiti issue is illustrative of how people can and do react to art, as much as they do to anything else.

Think about it. Do you go to art galleries, go home and think about what you saw and write a column about it? Maybe you don't, but do you cheer for your favourite star on Canadian Idol? Do you walk over that sidewalk chalk drawing and smudge it all up, or do you walk around it? These are all examples of how we react to art, and make decisions about what art should be revered, and what art should be dismissed. Wow, that sounds dramatic, but the richness of our cultural existence, how Toronto "lives with culture," is based on how much we each amplify our personal artistic expressions; for we are all fully capable of making them.

Anyway, this issue was written by young people who wanted to tell you about what art means to them; art as a part of their lives, something they have responded to: Tattoos, love poetry, reggae music, and more...

AJ FRICK, ed.

## ARE YOU HARBORING A CRIMINAL?

**GRAFFITI IS A CRIME** -- When graffiti is placed on public property without permission from the owner, it is considered an act of vandalism, and is against the law. How can you tell if your teen is involved in graffiti?

1. Marker or paint stains on hands or clothing
2. Graffiti tags on clothing, school books, or backpacks
3. Owns a sketchbook containing cartoon-like art
4. Frequents graffiti websites and/or reads graffiti magazines
5. Has a nickname used by his or her friends
6. Spends time with other youth displaying the above characteristics
7. Owns spray paint cans, markers, shoe polish containers, sand paper, wood-working tools, stencils, nails, glass cutters, screwdrivers, etc (or any other tools associated with graffiti)
8. Graffiti appears on furniture, walls, or other objects in their bedroom

If you have concerns that your teen is involved in graffiti, help them to express their creative energy in a positive way by... joining the local basketball league or the Canadian Armed Forces.



# WHAT'S YOUR BEEF: Banning cell phones in schools



**JED**

Uhhmm, cell phones in schools? They are inappropriate in class, however if I go to a meeting with bureaucrats, I find they're often all on their little Blackberrys. If somehow adults can get away with that I don't see why students shouldn't be able to get away with that as well. I think that in board meetings and in other meetings it might be appropriate to leave the meeting to talk on your cell-phone, I don't know necessarily if thats appropriate when your in class but certainly I don't think that they should be banned universally unless your going to ban them from all workplaces universally.



**REMMY**

I think its irresponsible to ban cell phones in the school system because there are a million different things that can happen. If there is an emergency and you need to be called out of school to go tend to that, most times schools won't give you the message. Also if there are young parents in the school there may be an emergency with their children where they need to go to the daycare. I would personally hold the school responsible for anything that happened to one of my kids and then they would have a big problem on their hands!



**RAJ**

I think that cellphones should be banned from high schools. Students should be doing their studies and once they leave the high school, they're free to use their cell phones. Only when its necessary, within the premises of the school. Not for their own purposes, just to chat though.

By da Flava's  
ASHLEY MARCHBANK and  
TASHA MEYER-DAVIS



**NEW YORK OR STRIP**



**ROLLED RIB**



**FILLET**



**STANDING RIB**



**RIB EYE**

### ARE FATHERLESS KIDS MORE LIKELY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN CRIME?

## YES

#### THE NUMBERS ARE IN

According to a report released by Statistics Canada, 18 percent of Canadians grow up fatherless. Take a look at the street crimes committed within our society. Which group is most heavily represented? And which group is most affected? Growing up fatherless is a clear correlate of crime and this can be clearly seen in all aspects of our society.

There has been comparative research done that proves that absent fathers make fundamental differences. This is strongly supported by Professor John J Dilulio of the University Of Pennsylvania. He has found over a series of studies that a "fathers' absence is the single most important predictor of whether or not a child is going to get involved in forms of anti-social activities."

Icilda Elliston, vice principal of a Toronto District school, strongly advocates for fathers to be present in the lives of children. She claims when a father is called into a parent meeting with a child the behav-

ior of the child is totally different. The child's disposition becomes more positive and productive. When children are fatherless it causes emotional and psychological impacts, and this can be felt in communities across Toronto. Sociologist David Popenoe of the University Of Rutgers did a case study and claims that a child from a two-parent family has a 10 percent chance of being deviant; while a fatherless child is 25 percent more likely to be deviant.

Fatherlessness is a real crisis and to solve this problem the communities most affected **MUST** move beyond excuses to find solutions. Fathers should be challenged to take responsibility for their children and no excuses should be tolerated.

By da Flava's  
LEONARD EDWARDS

## NO

#### STATISTICS AREN'T EVERYTHING

Growing up without a strong father figure made me realize first hand that statistics are not accurate measures of specific individuals, but a selection of facts which can represent the majority. Experiencing the situation myself puts me in a better position to know how it is to grow up without a father.

Self-esteem is one major factor that determines how a kid might turn out. Most families without a fully represented father figure typically earn less, as only one parent is working. This can be the beginning of the problem when a kid cannot not have the same things his peers can. Taunting by kids at school for this could factor into pushing someone to the edge, where they might choose crime as a way to feel better about themselves. A father alone cannot help a kid with a low self-esteem being drawn into crime.

A wrong father figure could as well lead the vulnerable, young mind astray. Just because some men become involved in making kids, doesn't necessarily make them a "father figure". There are so many reasons why a father may not be present while their kids grow up.

There is also the problem that being fatherless has become such a negative thing. This by itself can make a kid feel bad about his or her self. If people expect bad things from you (because you don't have a father), then you might act that out.

There are many successful people that grew up without a father, who didn't resort to crime. Kids can always look up to that rather than some lifeless father who would rather not acknowledge them if they turn out even worse than they are, but would run after them if they make a good use of their life and turn out against all odds. The will to empower oneself towards greatness is within, despite it all. What you make of it is what that matters. Stop shifting blame.

By  
ABISOYE LAWAL



The life of an artist is never an easy one. You won't be rich and you'll eat a lot of Ramen noodles before anyone notices your work. Peers ridicule you for taking "an easy major in school." And as your own worst critic, you'll suffer the ups and downs of perfectionism. Yet for many kids in Montreal, there's another concern: their art is illegal.

Vibrant culture screams from dozens of bricks, buildings and architecture all down Rue Saint Catherine Est. Professional-looking graffiti is simply everywhere, capturing the hearts and imagination of tourists and locals alike. It's hard to believe two years ago the city launched a massive graffiti clean-up campaign just days before its annual Under Pressure graffiti festival (which is ironically hailed as a "tourist attraction" in city guides). It's also strange that minors can't legally purchase spray paint, courtesy of a 2005 by-law. In 2006, video surveillance focused on eradicating graffiti "crime" and taggers.

The Rudy Giuliani credo says "removing graffiti will remove crime." John Kiru, director of the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, believes "Graffiti gives a perception of crime in the areas and so it's safe to say it affects property val-

ues... by how much, I don't know."

"I understand that property value is a problem," says writer The Gawd P. "But that doesn't mean I won't stop next to a ground-level throw-up at a busy intersection, smile and ask myself 'How the hell did he get away with that?'"

"The graffiti writers in town are more sociable than other cities... very open and very friendly," says McGill University Art Historian Rosa Schulenburg. "They are thinking and want to make others think."

// "Some of the dudes think of themselves as artists, others think it's a sport, trying to go bigger and crazier every time."

-Jordan Berlin

*CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...*



Despite hard-line policies, city officials dance the fence defending their views. "You can accept graffiti as part of your décor," concedes Mayor Helen Fotopoulos. "But the problem isn't murals - it's tagging and scratching windows. In our city we have a collective responsibility to take care of it."

"You've got to draw the line between vandalism and art," store owner Jens Grenier tells CBC News weeks after vandalism cost him \$150 in fines.

"I think Montreal likes to support the arts but they don't want to encourage vandalism," Under Pressure Magazine editor and festival organizer Jordan Berlin tells CDF. "Yet the person who paints those 'beautiful murals' is the same guy who scratched his tag into every parking meter on the Plateau. The guy who did a quick marker tag on a mail-box is the same guy who got paid a few G's to paint the side of a store. It's all about getting your name out there. If some kid tags your door, you get pissed but if Keith Herring tags it, you take it off the hinges and sell it. Art is defined by the individual, not by our mayor."

**"You've got to draw the line  
between vandalism and art,"  
-Jens Grenier**

On the other hand, with the growing success of summer graffiti festivals, sponsors like Absolut Vodka, Bell Canada and Coke contracted local writers to design edgy ads. Other corporations tried to capitalize off graffiti's popularity but shied away from the cost of hiring seasoned writers like Under Pressure's Flow or Sterling.

The city has made several efforts to paint their landscape. In 1996, Raymond Vigor was given a business grant to open "Café Graffiti" on Rue Ste. Catherine, allowing kids a place to express themselves, network and pick up contract work. The Blue Metropolis Foundation (BMF) scrawled the words of famous Montreal authors across buildings to "create new visual landmarks" and "emphasize the city's status as a literary and cultural metropolis," BMF spokesman Lucas Lhotsky told CBC Radio.

Yet thrill and notoriety are only half the appeal. "Some of the dudes think of themselves as artists,

others think it's a sport, trying to go bigger and crazier every time. All I can say is if you're not painting illegally, you're not a graffiti writer," Jordan Berlin remarks. Like The See-Through Judas, Berlin encourages tagging banks and corporate entities but frowns upon bombing mom-and-pop businesses, churches and artwork.

Is there any room for compromise? Graffiti artists are willing to offer solutions to city officials but fear that their advice may fall on deaf ears like past attempts. Art lies in the eyes of the beholder and only time will tell if graffiti becomes a normalized, "legitimate" art form in our society.

By da Flava's  
JENN FUSION





*Above: Pieras Chauvin with his submission*

*In conversation with Rebecca Ward, Coordinator of Public Art Program for the City of Toronto.*

**G**rounds for Art is actually part of a larger public art strategy which is to try and get art and creativity embedded in even the most mundane parts of a city. When we heard about the Regent Park revitalization, my division started working with the Regent Park Neighbourhood Initiative about how we might get public art in Regent Park. One of the things was to make sure it was built into the infrastructure, so we thought we'd start from the ground up and get artists and designers to come up with proposals for custom-made maintenance covers for the area that will be unique to Regent Park.

Anyone living, working, or going to school in Toronto was eligible to submit an application regardless of their age or ability as an artist. It was open to aspiring, mature, and professional artists and designers.

We had close to 600 submissions from 275 applicants. Applicants were able to submit a design for more than one of the category types. There were three types [of category], you could submit to more than one type, and you could submit more than once to each type.

There are two types of sewer - there are sanitary and storm sewer - and there's water valve. Sanitary sewers run between residential and commercial buildings, and they cover the stuff that actually comes out of your tap, and that kind of thing; storm sewers actually take water from the street and put it in the nearest brook or spring or lake. Water valves service the general water reserves throughout the city, like fire hydrants.

I think [the value of projects such as this is that] it makes people think more creatively about how the city works and what those opportunities are, and inspires people to be a little more proud of the public realm, of the streets we all walk around on, and really take interest in what they look like and take more ownership. They really see that there are opportunities to get involved and to see all those boring parts of the city as opportunities to express creativity. It re-energizes the city because it gets people to look at things in a new way.

The 30 short listed designs on display here [at the Toronto Free Gallery, 660 Queen St. E.] were arrived at after many hours of discussion with our selection

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...**



panel. We put together an independent selection panel that reflected a combination of expertise in graphic design and art, as well as knowledge of the local area and Regent Park. Those five panel members met twice and discussed for hours the close to 600 designs that we had to come up with the 30 here that really reflect the diverse range of themes and approaches we did get from the applicants.

There was a range [of standards and criteria for evaluation]. In the short list the selection panel really wanted to show the diversity of approaches. You see that in that there are pieces done by children, there are pieces clearly done by professionals, there are pieces that look at the project from a thematic point of view, and others that look at it from a strictly graphic point of view. The selection panel really wanted in this shortlist to make sure that that diversity of approaches was reflected. We [the City of Toronto] were quite interested in making sure that happened as well because it goes back to what I was saying earlier about encouraging people to think differently about these things.

There were some general themes [that emerged from the overall collection of submissions]... We had a couple people take the idea of a penny, which you often see on the street and turn that into the utility hole cover. We had a number of people approach it very much about Regent Park itself. We also had

people approach it thematically very much in terms of what the function of sewers are - for example, the storm sewers, one of the design is of a thunder storm, another is of a huge umbrella, so people looked at it that way as well. We also had designs of things that happened at the ground level - one of the designs was of a whole bunch of footprints, as if people had been sort of playing in the street.

At the moment we're just working on Regent Park but there has been interest in other departments in looking at other neighbourhoods or something city-wide. We would probably look at the three different types [of sewer] again as they're all related to the Toronto water system. If we were to do it city-wide we would probably make it more focused on the function of the water system itself, whereas in this case it was very much focused on Regent Park. One of the ways we focused it, for example, was to have all the information for the competition available in the seven languages spoken besides English in Regent Park, and we really focused on getting our material out to the Regent Park area.

*For more about this event, check [www.regentpark.tv](http://www.regentpark.tv)*

By da Flava's  
STAFF



*Alex Currie- Sanitary Sewer*



*DeMuth Flake- Storm Sewer*



**W**hat is graffiti exactly? Graffiti is a form of art which has allowed marginalized youth and minorities to express themselves.

Graffiti allows artists to transcend boundaries, and display their creativity in public and private spaces. In my opinion, people who are unfamiliar with the language of graffiti lack the knowledge to make valid judgments on its place in society, but that doesn't seem to stop them from trying to get rid of it. My friend, Anastassia and I went through the streets and alleys in the Queen Street West area and took a bunch of photos of the work that is under threat by an initiative to clean up Toronto graffiti. Supporters of the clean-up initiative don't take graffiti seriously and don't see true meaning behind what they want to erase.

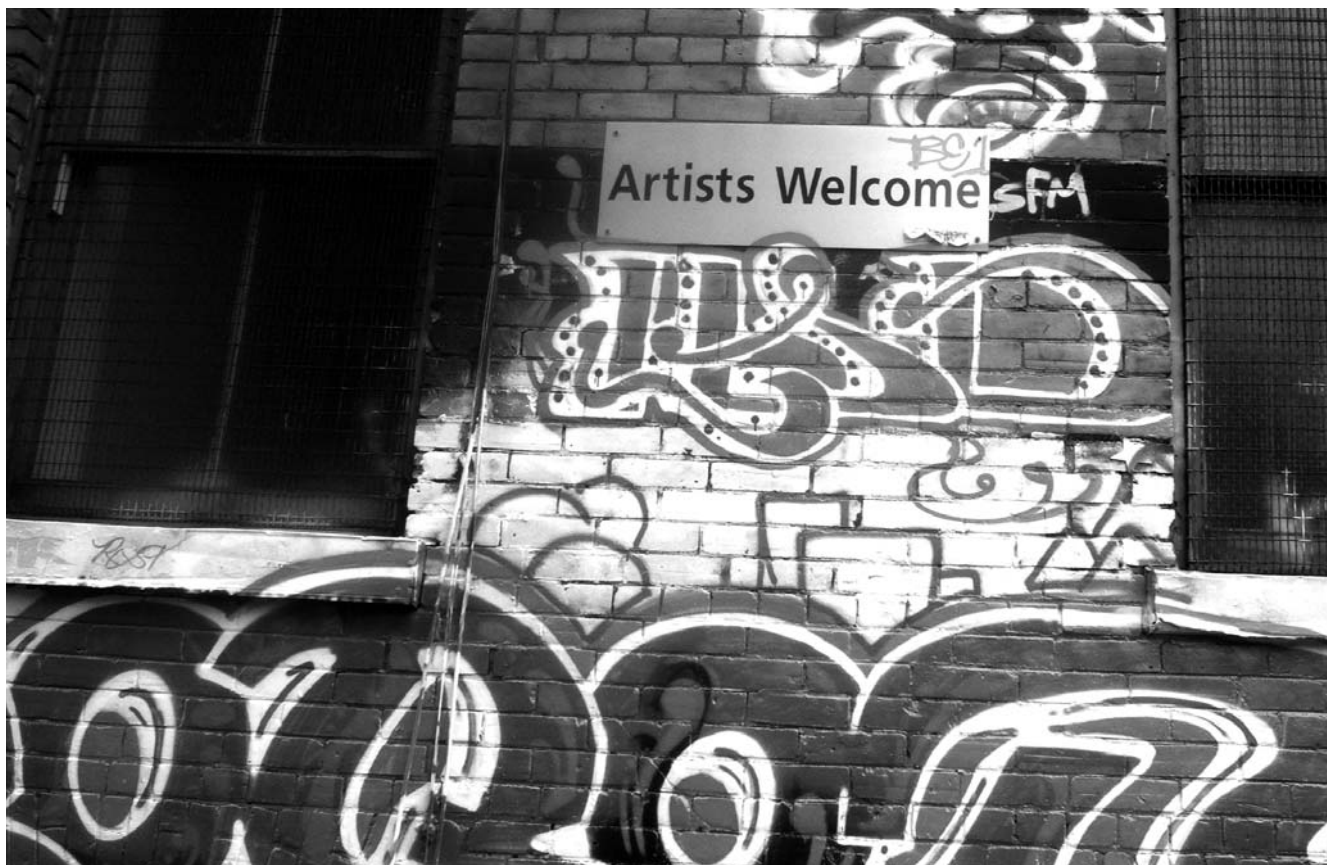
The main misconceptions are the beliefs that all graffiti is related to violent and degenerate behaviour, and that graffiti is vandalism. But to categorize all graffiti as criminal is a bold statement. There's a big difference between vandalism and graffiti: vandalism is about destroying something while graffiti is

about creating something. It is an attempt by youth to beautify their underdeveloped neighbourhoods.

Crews work together to gain identity and recognition. They focus on bigger, more thought-out murals. They use a lot of color, value style and aim to communicate a message. Gangs, on the other hand, focus on bold, clear statements, often a simple signature, and pay little attention to colour or style. This is called gang tagging, but it can also be done by individuals. Tagging refers to tags or scrawlings to mark territory, but it can also become a competitive sport when writers make it their mission to get their name in difficult spots.

**// vandalism is about  
destroying something  
while graffiti is about  
creating something. //**





This is where violence becomes involved. Gangs feel the need to use violence to defend their territory. Graffiti has been used as a form of communication between violent gangs, but graffiti is not inherently violent. Selfishly and disrespectfully painting over existing work is a big DO NOT, and is in itself a kind of graffiti violence. In the words of Bill Blast, a recognized graffiti artist from Manhattan, "It hurts me when someone goes over my piece... Why can't some people just respect art?" Gangs feel territorial, so when they see a piece done by someone who's not from their neighbourhood, they tag over it, missing the meaning behind it, and this causes unnecessary violence. This is not at all a crew's intention.

In conclusion graffiti is a form of expression. It shows emotions, feelings, and straight up talent. It's a form of communication between artists, and can give people a voice if they are lacking one. Graffiti is not vandalism, and is in fact a beautifying project. Artists put a lot of money, thought, planning and work into many decaying alleys, overpasses, and rooftops. We should all show respect and leave it alone. For every point you can make for why graffiti shouldn't be there, there is a point for why it should be. If the artist's respect is there, maybe the public should give it back.

By da Flava's  
ASHLEY MARCHBANK

...a form of communication  
between artists, and  
can give people a voice  
if they are lacking one.

*Photos pages 12 - 15 by Ashley Marchbank and  
Anastessia Meyer-Davis.*









# REGGAE MUSIC:

And growing up  
in the West Indies



**M**y name is Govendra Jalim Dass. I am currently nineteen years old and I was born in Trinidad. While I was growing up in Trinidad I was surrounded by reggae music. The first sound in my head was the sound of reggae music, and it all started from there. I am the only child of my parents, so I grew up with cousins and friends. I became especially close to one of my cousins, and found myself wanting to be just like him. The only music that he listened to was reggae, and every time I heard music coming from his house, I would run to listen to it.

Reggae music has made a big impact on my life. I say that because when I listen to it I understand what the artist is trying to say. Sometimes people don't like listening to reggae music because they don't know what it's about. For me, reggae music is relaxing, and because I grew up in the West Indies, it is a big part of my cultural understanding. Artists use reggae music to tell spiritual, personal and cultural stories. If you don't listen to the words of the song then you miss the point.

For me, by listening to the words of a song I can put myself in the artist's position. Many times when I'm feeling mad, sad, tired, or just lonely, I listen to reggae music, and it brings me happiness. I think it's

safe for me to say that reggae music has changed my life in a good way, because I admire the message that the artist is relating to society. When I hear a song that has a lot of meaning to it, I direct it towards my life. I try to bring the message out into the open, so that people might understand what the song is saying.

A lot of people seem to think that reggae music specifically condones smoking marijuana, and that reggae music is a part of marijuana culture. People like to assume that if you listen to reggae music, you also smoke pot. That's not true. It has to be understood that reggae music is related to Rastafarian culture which regards smoking marijuana as a spiritual practice. Marijuana is a part of the culture that reggae was born out of. However, you don't have to smoke marijuana if you listen to reggae music. Every reggae song has a positive message to give, and I always say that if you want a stress free life or a positive outlook, put those messages into play. The next time anyone listens to a reggae song, don't just listen to the beat, but try and listen to the words and you might understand what I'm trying to say.

By  
GOVENDRA DASS





cut on grey / outside line

fold here and glue on reverse

Dear Councillor \_\_\_\_\_

*Councillor's Name*

The BCBF would see a minimum of six million dollars gathered from an annual license fee. Paid by billboard advertisers, revenue would be directed through the Toronto Arts Council into public art -- with a priority put on marginalized communities and youth art. According to a Pollara poll, only 15% of Torontonians are against such a fee.

Objectives of the Beautiful City Billboard Fee include:

- Urban beautification & employment for artists
- More funding for tracking & policing billboard advertisers
- Helping move Toronto towards a pedestrian focused aesthetic
- Promoting community ownership of public spaces
- Diversifying access to public communication

As a resident of your ward and potential voter I urge you to support this critical quality of life issue. Thank you for making Toronto a more humane and beautiful city.

signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Add to the BCBF supporters list?

FIND YOUR COUNCILLORS NAME & MORE INFO AT: <http://bcbf.them.ca>

Affix postage  
here or drop off  
in person

**MAIL TO:**

*Councillor's Last Name*

**BOX #510  
422 Parliament St.  
Toronto ON, Canada,  
M5A 3A0 \***

\* Please note: your information will not be shared with any third-party besides your Councillor. We respect your privacy and commitment and accordingly, will not share your information among the alliance members. Once your postcard is received at our mailbox we will present it to the respective Councillor.



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Toronto Arts Council  
Foundation  
Toronto Youth Cabinet  
UrbanArts  
Youth Action Network

cut on grey / outside line

The BCBF campaign is interested in employing a licensing fee on all billboard advertisements in the city. The fee is expected to raise 6 million dollars and this money will be channeled through the Toronto Arts Council to community artists to create public art. Why should our public space only be used for commercial advertisements??? The BCBF campaign wants your support. As part of the campaign BCBF wants everyone to sign and mail a Beautiful City Bill Board Fee post card to their local city councilors.



Some people say tattoos are addictive. They really are. I have a couple tattoos myself, and I'm definitely going to get a few more.

I got my first tattoo when I was 15. At the time I badly wanted a tattoo but did not want to get something I would regret. I thought and thought about it. Then the idea for a perfect Tattoo hit me. I am a Roman Catholic and Jesus is a big part of my life. In fact I used to be an altar server and assist the priests. Although I had stopped going to church I felt that I should definitely get something that will never let me forget what I once used to do. I thought why not get a tattoo about Jesus or something to do with my beliefs? I ended up with a tattoo of a cross with praying hands holding a rosary. I put the tattoo on my right arm because people call someone who is very important to them, their right hand person.

After a couple years I felt ready for another tattoo. Since I already had one relating to my religion, I needed a tattoo that symbolized something else that was important to me. I decided to get a tattoo with the letters "G.E.D" meaning "GET EVERY DOLLAR." Around the letters are stacks of money. I put that tattoo on my left arm because I didn't want to mix it up with my religious one.

Lots of people are confused by the two tattoos. Some people say money is the root of all evil. At the same time it is something we cannot live without, and no matter if you are a priest you still need a source of money. Don't get me wrong I got these tattoos because they look really cool and caught my eye. But that's not the only reason for getting a tattoo. The next time I am gonna get another tattoo is probably when I have a kid or something important happens in my life.

By  
RYAN DE MILLE



The name is Joanna. I'm 21 and I love to read and write. I was born and raised in Trinidad but about six years ago I moved to Canada to live with my mom.

My days in Trinidad and Tobago were not the best; being the youngest child I was picked on a lot. I turned to writing. I used to write about everything. I remember my sister's birthdays, writing poems for her that I said I had gotten from a friend, because I was afraid that she would laugh at me. I decided to stop writing for awhile.

When I came to Canada, I met my first friend, Gavin, who was into writing music and inspired me to write rhymes. One day at school everything about my writing almost died again, when my English teacher at school got a hold of my poem folder and told me that they were all the same, elementary, meaningless. Now I can see that his comments were just a little bump in the road as people say.

A few months later I dropped out of school and my whole life just went downhill from there. I had no job, I had lost all my high school friends, and had nothing to do so I started writing again. I would spend hours locked in my room just writing about what I would like my life to be like. I wrote about

every thing that would help me feel better about myself. I used to like writing when I was mad at someone because I could of say anything I wanted to say without having to look at the person, and it made me feel great.

I was the type of person who always thought that I would never find true love because guys always wanted me to be different: a pretty girl with girlish ways. I liked one guy who thought it a real turn off that I liked to write what he called rhythms.

All of that changed after I met the sweetest person ever. It has been a little over two years, and he's my biggest fan. Goven is the first guy that has liked me for just me. He likes my writing, and has actually kept all of the poems I wrote to him while we were dating. For me writing is a hobby. Sometimes I might write something I don't like, but it doesn't matter because it's only for me to read; no one else. Writing is what makes me happy and pleased with myself. Now I don't think anyone could say anything to make me stop writing poems.

By  
JOANNA RAMSAWAK





REGENT PARK  
RE-ENVISIONED:

the art of  
**SCOTT JOHNSTON**

Catch da Flava **18** MAY / JUNE 2007

Built in 1948, Regent Park is Canada's oldest and largest housing project. It is also, according to Toronto-based photographer Scott Johnston, kind of like "an old resort."

That may sound counterintuitive to most. After all, Johnston admits, "most people are [only] familiar with Regent Park's reputation as one of Toronto's poorest neighborhoods." It is often unfairly portrayed as a site of drugs and violence, and even Toronto Community Housing (TCH) concedes that "over time, as the Canadian approach to housing the poor evolved through a series of policy interventions, only the poorest and most disadvantaged households gained access to housing in the [Regent Park South] area," while the north sector came to primarily house the "working poor".

But this, Johnston says, is only half the story of the community located east of Parliament between Gerrard Street East and Shuter Street. His photography of the area, to be exhibited in May at the Bertossini Gallerie (783 Queen St. East), tells another side, one that is quietly but decidedly more optimistic - much like Regent Park's own origins.

**"It's actually quite nice,  
quieter than most of downtown,  
but there is a strange  
underlying tension."  
-Scott Johnston**

"The aim of the community's original planners was to create a self-contained 'garden city,'" Johnston explains - hence Regent Park's self-contained detachment from the surrounding community - but

now "the area is... slated for demolition and rebuilding. [So] this exhibition gives viewers a chance to look inside the neighborhood that only a few have actually seen," and that fewer still may actually ever see again.

But beyond the fact that he thought it "historically significant to document" Regent Park as it currently stands, Johnston explains that his goal was also "to reveal the complexity and the unique environment of a well known, but not so well understood, area of Toronto. It is my feeling that the photographs (like the present development) give off a sense of searching rather than finding, that [my photos] evoke or invoke more than they state or define."

Johnston makes it clear he "had no interest in portraying poverty and deprivation" - nor did he find much. "It's actually quite nice, quieter than most of downtown," he says, "but there is a strange underlying tension."

"Never having gone into the actual project, I wasn't sure what to expect. At first, I saw things on a large scale: the buildings, the vast green space, the landscape and the design. Then I started to focus on certain areas that I found particularly interesting, in visual terms. I attempted to capture its uneasy peace. It's a very open space, considering its downtown location, but somehow claustrophobic at the same time - a place that seems to be almost uncertain of itself, and in the process of disappearing," Johnston says.

Johnston's time spent photographing Regent Park also raised several questions for him. "First of all," he says, "it is an area in transition, an area about to change, supposedly for the better - [but] while the area is about to change physically, what about the

***CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...***







people of Regent Park? Will they be pushed out into another housing project? It seems easy enough to tear down the buildings and put up new and better ones, but can the people be 'revitalized' along with the buildings? So I was interested in the aspect of change, both for the physical surroundings and for the people."

Change has been a common theme in much of Johnston's work. His first exhibition in this context was a collection of photographs portraying dilapidated, empty homes in Toronto's ultra-rich Bridle Path neighborhood.

"The advent of overseas investors purchasing multi-million dollar homes [in the Bridle Path] and then leaving them completely unattended led to the much-unexpected phenomenon of mansions that were totally abandoned and in a state of decay," Johnston says. "I used this backdrop to create series of images that captured their curious desolation, as well as the echoes of the inhabitants who once lived there.

"Then I photographed several churches being torn down, to clear the prime downtown land for new condos and town homes. The images were unsettling, catching the final vulnerable moments of these once proud sacred buildings. The religious symbols

and settings amongst all the wreckage had a disquieting effect," he says.

"Space can have an enormous effect on people, on how they view themselves and their place in the world," Johnston affirms. And his photography, in a way, is an exercise in the re-presentation of space - familiar places seen anew from an unfamiliar perspective. He is, however, unsure if this new perspective will actually translate into some kind of concrete social change.

"I'm not sure if art can change a community," he says. "But I'm interested in finding out what is behind the veil of Regent Park, if there is anything there to find out. I believe we create our own veil, not necessary to hide behind, but we definitely see the world through it. The hard part is to try to see the world through a new lens, or at least a better one. Even when we know the lens we are looking through is foggy and distorted, unfortunately we seem doomed to continue in the same habitual way. However, when we see situations clearly and with critical self-reflection," Johnston concludes, "we perhaps gain some control."

By da Flava's  
JAMES SANDHAM



# REGENT PARK:

The history has a home



**A**fter three years of planning and sharing information, Regent Park finally has its own museum.

The Cabbagetown Regent Park Museum is a collaborative effort between the two communities. Recently, we met with Carol Moore-Ede, a representative from the museum, to talk about the new addition to the many positive things Regent Park has to offer: the community centre, social service centres as well as many youth activities.

It all started approximately three years ago when the idea to start a museum in Regent Park was brought forth. It was thought that a Regent Park museum would be a good opportunity for residents of the area to get a better sense of where they come from and where their community is going. Since Regent Park was the original Cabbagetown it was a good idea to form a partnership between the two communities. Moore-Ede said she hopes that the museum will encourage people in the community, especially the youth, to participate in and contribute to pieces for the museum.

There isn't a permanent location for the Cabbagetown Regent Park Museum yet, but the museum collections and pieces can be seen at vari-

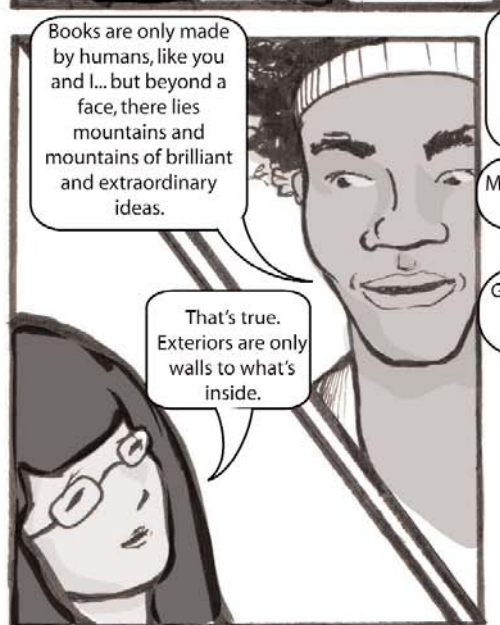
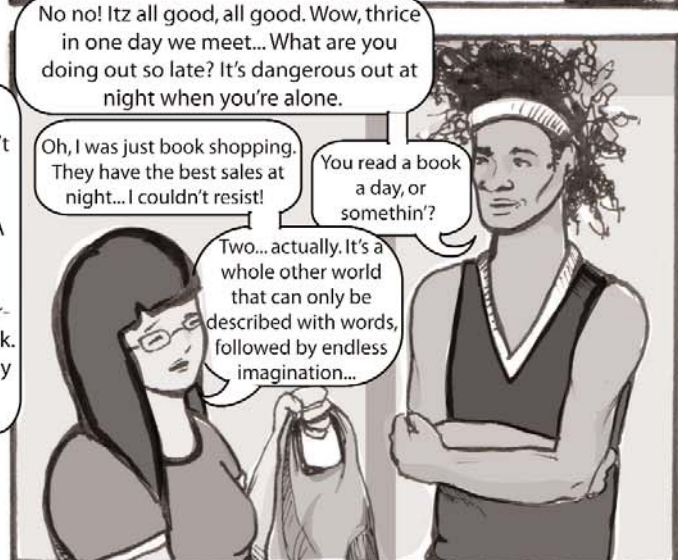
ous places around the city. Currently, there is a "Toys, Fads and Favourites" collection on display in the lobby of 51 Division. Other collections include: Bill Stapleton collection of old photos, paintings and sketches, a book from the 1800s about the Cabbagetown Store, artifacts from phase 1 of the revitalization of Regent Park: toys, baseball cards etc.

To see more items from the Cabbagetown Regent Park Museum, and for more information you can visit the website at [www.crpmuseum.com](http://www.crpmuseum.com).

By  
TIANNA SALTUS







Continued...



**Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre**  
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