

DECEMBER JANUARY 2008

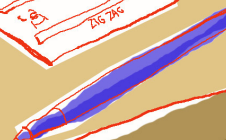
CATCH da FLAVA

WWW.CATCHDAFLAVA.COM

THE ECONOMICS OF
GANG DRUG DEALING

MUST WE BEG TO
FIX OUR HOMES?

THE PRESSURE TO BE
UNIQUELY THE SAME



DECEMBER / JANUARY 2008



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**

**NEXT DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS IS:**
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CATCH DA FLAVA reserves the right to edit submitted articles for space and clarity.

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Dear Drug User,

Your drug addiction makes everyone around you feel sad. By taking drugs you changed not only your life, but everybody's life around you. Drugs make you a different person.

Now we don't look at you in the same way. Don't you realize that you are killing yourself and breaking the hearts of people who love you very much? Please stop and think about what you are doing to yourself, your family, and all of the other people who love you. Please try to seek help. There are places to. You don't have to do it alone. We know that it will be hard, but please don't give up.

From,

Someone who Loves You

Submitted by a Grade 7 Student
Nelson Mandela Park P.S

A LITTLE ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S SPONSORS

REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

The Regent Park Community Health Centre was founded by Regent Park residents in 1973. The Health Centre now serves about 26 000 people in the Regent Park area, and promotes health and disease prevention alongside community ownership, advocacy, accessible and comprehensive care.

Thank-you Health Centre!

THE DANIELS CORPORATION

The Daniels Corporation is one of Canada's major building developers. One of their most famous buildings is the Toronto Eaton Centre. They've recently constructed a number of new condominiums in the GTA, and are involved in the Regent Park reconstruction.

The Daniels Corporation is tied to many initiatives aimed at eliminating homelessness.

Thank-you Daniels Corporation!

WHAT'S YOUR BEEF:

**Should marijuana
be legalized?**



VINCENT

I think marijuana should be legalized if it's within the right limits. If people don't over do it and if people can control it, then it's alright. Why not? A lot of people do it anyways, cops, doctors, everyone's doing it, so why not legalize it?



RYAN

I think they should legalize it, because it's better than alcohol and it's a lot safer. It's very hypocritical to legalize alcohol and not marijuana.



NEEMA & MARIE

I think it's people's own choice and decision whether they want to smoke marijuana or not. It shouldn't be taken away from them.

I think it should be legal so they can tax it and maybe Toronto would get out of debt.



On May 27th 2003, the Liberal's proposed a new law that decriminalized small amounts of marijuana. If anyone was caught possessing 15 grams or less they were only to be punished with a fine. Those with possession of 15 grams or more would at a police officer's discretion, either be ticketed or arrested for criminal charges.

The law looked as if it was going to be passed, but it died on the floor. A similar law was introduced in November of 2004 but that also died in 2006 when the election was called. The recently elected conservative government has publicly stated that it does not intend to resurrect this law.

Legalizing marijuana for those over the age of 18 would decrease the likelihood of younger children buying marijuana since if it was sold in stores you would need ID to purchase it. If marijuana was sold in stores it would also lead to less people sell-

ing it on the streets. Young adults are able to make their own decisions regarding marijuana use. If we have the choice to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes after the age of 19 in Canada, then I think we could make our own decisions about smoking marijuana or not.

Personally, I smoke marijuana. It relaxes me and makes me more mellow and calm.

by
LIZZIE PLUMBTREE (AGE 18)

DO YOU HAVE A BEEF OFF?

Send your letters to catchdaflava at focusflava@gmail.com

FACE OFF:

Debating the Issues

SHOULD MARIJUANA BE DECRIMINALIZED?

NO

STUDENT POTENTIAL IS GOING UP IN SMOKE

There are a number of reasons to support the criminalization of marijuana. Although marijuana can be grown naturally the fact of the matter is that it is still a drug. Like most other drugs marijuana contains properties that alter the chemistry of the brain and therefore should be illegal. The main active ingredient in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). When you use marijuana the THC kicks off a series of cellular reactions in the brain that ultimately lead to the high that users experience. Although marijuana is not considered a physically addictive drug it is this 'high' that people can get mentally addicted to.

Studies indicate that marijuana is a popular drug among students. Decriminalizing marijuana would only further encourage students to regularly associate with drug dealers to purchase their drugs. As a result of this association dealers may try to turn their young customers onto harder more addictive drugs. One of the main reasons why young people use marijuana is because it is a form of rebellion. If marijuana use was considered normal there is a

risk that young people would rebel with harder more dangerous drugs.

According to studies, marijuana use among young people is considered one of the factors that contributes to academic failure among students. Many parents are aware that their kids are smoking but cannot find a way to stop it. Criminalizing marijuana would restrict access to it and deter kids from using.

Another reason to support criminalization is that in recent years suppliers have been known to lace marijuana with other drugs and chemicals to help the user obtain a stronger 'high'. As a result one is never sure what one is using when smoking marijuana.

The last reason to support criminalization is because regular use of marijuana has been shown to lead to lung cancer as well as short term memory loss.

by
BILLY PETROPOULOS (AGE 21)
AND N. MOZUMDAR (AGE 18)

YES

GOVERNMENT INTENTION IS ALL SMOKE AND MIRRORS ANYWAY

First of all, I support decriminalizing not legalizing marijuana. In my opinion the government doesn't legalize pot because they can't charge for it. Marijuana after all is a 'weed' and can be grown in any house or yard that has good access to sunlight. This means that any one who wants it can grow it themselves and where's the profit in that? If the government was so concerned with our health they would criminalize the production and sale of cigarettes but they don't. That's because the government earns revenue from cigarettes. Yet cigarettes cause more deaths than drinking and driving, suicides and murders put together. If the government did sell pot you could be sure that they and their licensed companies would immediately add chemicals to it to get you addicted so that they could make money from selling their own brand rather than have people grow their own.

Secondly the harms associated with smoking pot are totally blown out of proportion. If we decriminalize marijuana its true that a few more people would have lung cancer but not anywhere near the amount of people who have it sue to smoking cigarettes. But I agree there would be other horrible consequences. For instance there would be less cars on the road due to laziness and the lack of motivation to do work that is spiritually unfulfilling. There would be a dras-

tic spike in the potato chip business and of course it would be next to impossible to rent funny movies since they would be out all the time.

I have experienced the effects of both marijuana and alcohol and I can tell you that alcohol is by far the worst. In fact I am appalled by some of the behavioral effects alcohol has caused. People say and do idiotic things when they drink and much of it they later regret. With pot, oh the horror, you may do and say silly things but you can still make straight sighted decisions, as marijuana does not impair your judgment in the way that alcohol does. Unfortunately as a society we don't want people relaxed and not stressed out. We also don't want them laughing, watching stupid movies and growing fat on potato chips. We want people who are willing to work in dreary jobs from nine to five to purchase goods they don't need.

Whether the government decides to decriminalize it or not, I strongly believe that the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and other chemical drugs should be treated a lot harder than a bunch of friends with a hunger for food, a funny video and a plant.

by
CHRISTIAN F. (AGE 15)

HOME SWEET HOME



Across the globe people's homes look very different, but in all cases they fulfill a basic need of protecting people from the harsh elements outdoors. For most people the home is also a place to cook and eat meals. However, as humans are complex beings the necessity of the home goes far beyond physical needs. Family values, culture and history are all passed from one generation to the next in the home and for many the home is a place for self-expression, a refuge from the outside world and a cocoon to relax and be nurtured in.

In the modern era homes have also come to be looked upon as financial investments. In urban cities across the world homes are being acquired strictly for their resale profit value. This has pushed up the cost of purchasing new homes. As a consequence of the resulting gentrification, purchasing a home has become increasingly out of reach for a lot of low income families.

It is for this reason that United Nations declared 1987 the year of the homeless. The intent of the 1987 declaration was to renew national and international efforts to address the global need for adequate housing especially in urban areas. Despite the

declaration there has not been much improvement and today many major urban cities around the world are dealing with a housing crisis.

In Canada this housing crisis is characterized by substantial increases in homelessness and a lack of affordable rental accommodations. Analysts attribute this crisis to several main factors:

In the 1990s, the federal government and many provinces stopped providing social housing.

The private sector has not moved to replace the role of government by providing affordable rental housing. Instead the trend has been to abandon or convert low rental housing units to condominiums or expensive apartments.

At the same time, some provinces reduced social assistance rates (e.g., by 22% in Ontario).

The limited level of housing assistance means that most poor families and individuals seeking housing assistance are placed on long waiting lists. In Toronto the waiting list for public housing currently stands at 65,000 people. Excessive waiting lists for public housing often means that people must remain in shelters or inadequate housing arrangements



for long time periods. Consequently, there is less shelter space available for other homeless people, who must find shelter elsewhere or live on the streets.

The housing crisis in Canada has forced more and more families to choose between paying for housing costs that are unreasonable or living in unhealthy housing. For example, there are often problems with indoor air quality in substandard homes. Contaminants such as moulds, lead, and asbestos are found more frequently in poor housing. These substances place residents at risk of acute and chronic respiratory problems. Old furnishings, especially carpets, may contain large concentrations of lead, pesticides and other toxic chemicals. Poor housing can also develop chronic cockroach infestations which carry potent allergens, and insecticides to treat the infestation may also be problematic. Substandard housing may also be characterized by a lack of privacy, and inadequate space, security, lighting, heating and ventilation. There are also often problems with basic infrastructure, such as water supply, sanitation and waste management facilities.

people can make a home for themselves almost anywhere

A large part of the blame for sub-standard housing has been attributed to occupants for failing to maintain their living space. In most cases this assumption is inaccurate. For instance, it is not uncommon for complaints to landlords and housing managers of substandard dwellings, about concerns such as drafts, leaks, mold, pests, broken appliances and insufficient heat during winter, to be ignored. In instances where landlords could be forced to upgrade the units, tenants may fear an increase in rent as a result of the repairs. Even in instances where overcrowding of rental units is a problem, it is difficult to fault tenants who cannot generally afford a one-bedroom or bachelor suite on their own and therefore must reach out to several family members, friends or strangers to share the expenses.

The conditions of the homes of people living in sub-standard housing can be quite staggering. So much so that it is hard not to marvel at the ability of humans to nest and come to the conclusion that people can make a home for themselves almost any-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

IN CONVERSATION WITH: Josephine Grey



Josephine Grey is a human rights activist, a widow and mother of four who has been active in the struggle for economic and social justice for over 15 years. She is also a public housing tenant living in the St. Jamestown community. Because of her experience of poverty, she founded Low Income Families Together (LIFT), a resource centre in Toronto run by and for low-income people. Recently, Josephine Grey filed a multimillion-dollar class action lawsuit against the city, the province and Toronto Community Housing Corporation related to the issue of maintenance. In November *Catch da Flava's* Steve Blair had an opportunity to talk with Josephine about her lawsuit.

CATCH DA FLAVA - Josephine, what are some of the problems you've had or still have with your apartment?

GREY - Well, it's a very old building to start with and there have been leaks in the kitchen ceiling as long as I've been here. When I first moved in the appliances weren't that great - the oven blew up while I was cooking Thanksgiving turkey and the fridge used to leak all over the floors. They replaced those eventually, but not until they were broken. The kitchen cabinets were rotting, especially right under the sink, and there was a big fight over get-

ting it repaired. They said they were just going to replace the counter and leave the rest, until the contractor came and said it wasn't safe. They eventually replaced the whole cabinet. Then there's the bathroom - until the toilet was overflowing and flooding into the hall they wouldn't fix it. It would just overflow continually and, you know, I'd be dealing with my little kids and running around trying to mop up the mess, it was just crazy. The bathtub glaze is all worn down so it's impossible to keep it clean. The water in the shower shuts off every day, sometimes for five minutes, sometimes half an hour. There were holes in the floors, dirty windows, the old plaster on the wall was falling off, the furnace broke and started emitting an awful odor. They've replaced a lot of that just this year, but that's after I took them to tribunal three times.

It's a long litany of problems, one thing after another, that's brought a lot of chaos and frustration to our family.

CDF - Why do you think it's taken so long for the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) to fix all the problems with your apartment?

GREY - There are a number of reasons. When we first moved in the house was already in pretty bad

shape. At the time, I think there was an attitude that if you're a subsidized tenant you're last on the list as a priority. I guess there always was a little bit of a struggle to get enough money to do the major repairs - and this house was built in 1850, so it needed some pretty major work. At the same time though, there were a lot of things I wanted dealt with. For instance we have roof access but there was no fence or guard-rail to prevent my children from falling off and I had to fight just to get that rail put up.

The argument I had with the property managers started things off badly, and I got a reputation on my file, so from that time on it was always a struggle to get things done. Then as the bigger picture in politics started to change and there were a lot of cut-backs at the federal and provincial levels, it became more difficult for the housing companies to find the money to do repairs. In 1995 and 1996 housing was downloaded fully onto the city, without any extra money or resources for them to deal with it and as time went on, I think it became more of an issue of available resources.

At the same time, however, from 1993 until 2004 I was working and paying a lot of rent - often paying \$1400-\$1500 a month - and as far as I was concerned, if I'm paying that much rent, you can clean my windows or fix my taps. I just felt as though it was partly because there is no respect for tenants who are subsidized. There's a sense that we don't deserve the same as other people. I think also there's an attitude that because I clashed with the property manager when I first moved here, it set the tone for there to always be tension.

CDF - What are some things other tenants can do when they find themselves dealing with similar problems that you have?

GREY - I think it's really important to keep track of any efforts you've made to get things fixed. Keep records for any maintenance or repair requests. Take things to a tribunal. Go to a legal clinic, and if that's not available, get duty council or there are people at the tribunal who can help. Try to push the landlord or TCHC from that angle.

CDF -Why did you decide to file a class action lawsuit rather than continue using the tribunal?

One of the reasons I did this as a class action lawsuit, rather than an individual civil lawsuit, was that I wanted it to benefit all Toronto Community Housing tenants. Tenants can actually join this case - they can bring their information to the lawyer that's running this case and get involved. The more of us, the better, and sooner or later, I do believe the govern-

it's not right for people to live in these conditions, whether we're poor or not

ment will be required to come up with the money for all the repairs. I think all of us standing up together, all of us speaking out, making it public that it's not right for people to live in these conditions, whether we're poor or not.

CDF-Can you tell us more about the class action lawsuit?

GREY - It took a really long time for me to get this going within the court system because I couldn't find a lawyer who had the courage to take it on. Once I got involved with a lawyer, she went to the tribunal with me a couple of times. She got so aggravated and outraged by the struggle - she'd also been working with lot and lots of other tenants - and she and I talked about it and I said, "I'm willing to put myself forward for a class action." We decided that a class action would be the best approach because it then includes everybody in Toronto community housing. There's no question that one of the reasons why all these violations have been allowed to occur and continue for so long is because people are afraid. People coming from many countries feel that they're lucky to be here, they're lucky to have escaped a war zone, and they don't speak up. Either that or their experience is if you speak up you get killed. So, it's very easy to abuse immigrants because immigrants often come from places where to fight back is to die - and that's why they're here. The lawyer for this class action lawsuit is fully prepared to fight for any one of us tenants who experience any kind of retribution from housing. She has figured out ways in which she can use the legal system to penalize TCHC if they do any kind of backlash to a tenant who decides to come forward and be a part of the case. So, I would say to any tenant, the more of us there are, the harder it is for them to pick us off and give us a hard time. The more of us there are, the harder it is for them to cover it up and pretend it's not happening. If we step up now at this time and we speak out to tell everyone what's really happening and how wrong it is, then we're going to win this!

For more information about the class-action lawsuit, contact Josephone Grey at info@lift.to.

By da Flava's
STEVE BLAIR (AGE 22)

CELEBRITY CULTURE



It's the 20th century, and celebrities have literally taken over the world. No longer are you famous for your talent, but you're famous for your drama, your drug abuse, and whom you marry, divorce and date! This is today's celebrity culture! Without this cult of celebrity whole TV shows, magazines and sections in newspapers would no longer exist. They've become the top topic of discussion among all races, sexes and classes of people. Are we doomed to live a life where celebrities are our only heroes?

Sure they have huge weddings, do AIDS/HIV campaigns, run for cancer, donate to hunger campaigns, and even adopt babies! But why the fascination? Doesn't anyone else in the world donate money, adopt kids, get married, or run for cancer? Wait a minute...we do! We place celebrities, i.e. musicians, actors/actresses, and even sports players on such high pedestals that we believe that us 'norms' can't reach it. Yet our lives are just as interesting as the celebrities that we idolize. The only reason they are stars is because of, you guessed it, us! We think they live a surreal life which most of us would dream to have. Magazine companies, T.V. talk shows, movies, songs, sit coms, and the media all promote them to us. Even when celebrities have had careers that

have gone downhill and are going nowhere we continue to be intrigued. In fact they have nothing to fear, celebrities with failed careers are making a big comeback on reality T.V. shows.

The more outrageous a celebrity's life is the more we idolize them. If you had had more than 3 failed marriages, been in jail or gone to rehab, and drama followed you everywhere most people would consider you a "loser" or at the very least someone in need of serious help. Not in celebrity culture. Have you ever considered the track record of some of the A list celebrity's worthy of glamorous magazines covers and TV shows the world over? How about Lindsey Lohan - she's been in rehab 3 times and has failed miserably each time. Or Paris Hilton who's famous for...nothing. Unless you consider recording yourself having sex, charged with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) and going to jail as a criteria for been famous.

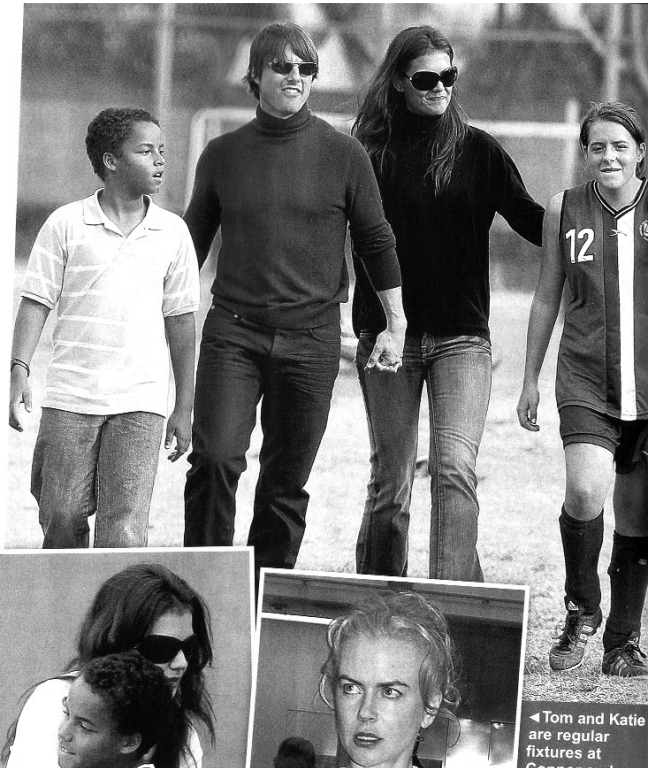
R Kelly, famous for urinating on a girl, is accused of child pornography and has recently been sent to jail. Angelina Jolie is an A list celebrity for stealing Jennifer Aniston's man (Brad Pitt), marrying him and adopting three children, including an African child without the biological mother's full consent.

Lindsay is out with another man

It didn't take Lindsay Lohan long! According to insiders, Lindsay has been dating yet another man since her breakup with Riley Giles. Last week, she was seen out with 24-year-old graphic artist Spencer Guilburt, but the 21-year-old is now dating Australian billionaire heir-turned-art dealer Andy Valmorbid. The pair hooked up more than a month ago, says the insider, but Lindsay was seen leaving Andy's room at The Beverly Hills Hotel on December 18 and also dining with him at Madeo Ristorante the following night. The playboy, who is pals with Brandon Davis and Stavros Niarchos, has been linked to a string of party girls, including Paris Hilton, but it seems he really likes Lindsay. "Andy is a good influence on her," an insider tells *In Touch*. "He doesn't do drugs and he is a sweet guy."

Nicole and Katie's battle over the kids

Is there trouble brewing between Tom Cruise's present and former wives? There certainly could be if Nicole Kidman gets her hands on an upcoming interview Katie Holmes has done with *Parade* magazine to promote her movie *Mad Money*. In it, Katie says Connor, 12, and Isabella, 15 — the two children Tom adopted with Nicole — now refer to her as their mother. "His first two children are incredible, really smart and kind," she says. "They call me 'Mom.'" Meanwhile, Nicole recently told a British television show: "My kids don't call me Mummy, they don't even call me Mum," she said. "They call me 'Nicole,' which I hate and I tell them off for it." Nicole's son insists



◀ Tom and Katie are regular fixtures at Getty Images

Jennifer Aniston is on the list for divorcing Brad Pitt, and dating Vince Vaughn. Katie Holmes is on the list. Remember her from Dawson's Creek? Ya, not many people do. But then she married Tom Cruise, and now everybody knows her. 'K-fed' is on the list for marrying Brittney Spears. Of course Brittney Spears is on the A list. Most of her recent fame comes from failing rehab, having a mental break down and losing custody of her children. Jennifer Lopez is on the A list for her short marriage to both Ojani Onoa and Chris Judd as well as for dating Puff Daddy and getting engaged to Ben Affleck. Jennifer is now currently married to Marc Anthony. These are just a few of the many 20th century A-listers who we idolize and whose shoes we dream of stepping into.

Makes you wonder who needs more help: the people I mentioned above or the public who idolize them. Would we be doomed to suffer a life with no entertainment, no music, no films, no sports, no anything without celebrities in our lives?!? What would we do with nobody to laugh at, gossip about, read about, cry about, and sometimes even worship. Are we better off without them? Are these the kind of people we want our future generation to grow up with as role models? Too bad we can't put a viewer discretion post-it-note on a celebrity's life, just like we do

Too bad we can't add a parent advisory sticker to their faces

to their movies and music or add a parent advisory sticker to their faces. Or just maybe we should learn to look at our grandparents, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters or our teachers, coaches, neighbors and co-workers or our daycare workers, taxi and subway drivers, grocery store and postal clerks and the other people we come across in our day-to-day lives to find the people who really deserve to be put on pedestals. These are the people who get up day after day to guide and look after children, work in thankless jobs to provide shelter and food for their families, who help to support our families and who assist in making our communities healthy places to live. In my mind they are the real celebrities.

by
MALAIKA HILL (AGE 18)

MUST WE BEG TO FIX OUR HOMES?



I applied for subsidized housing in January of 2004. I was placed on the waiting list and told that it may take a long time. In the meantime I had to continue to live in market rent housing. This was very tough for me financially as I was a single parent. In an effort to find cheaper rent I moved to an apartment building on Sherburne Street. The building was old and I thought I was getting a good deal because I bargained to get it for \$775 monthly. Shortly afterwards I was changing my sheets one day when I noticed black like mould between the corners of the mattress. Upon closer inspection I discovered that the bed and apartment was infested with bedbugs!

I screamed and threw out my bed. At the time I didn't have any idea that bedbugs were real and couldn't explain why I had developed a rash and was constantly feeling itchy. I thought the saying "goodnight, sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite," was a myth. Now I know differently. For those lucky enough not to experience them, bed bugs are small wingless insects that feed solely upon the blood of humans and other warm blooded animals. They generally hide nearest the bed or other furniture used for sleeping. Bed bugs seek out people and animals, generally at night while these hosts are asleep, and painlessly sip a few drops of blood. The bite of a bed bug causes skin irritations and itchiness similar to

**I thought the saying
"goodnight, sleep tight,
don't let the bedbugs bite,"
was a myth**

other kinds of blood feeding insects, such as mosquitoes and fleas.

I notified my superintendent the very next day. She said that she would call pest control. They came and sprayed just my apartment but the problem continued. I threw out all my clothes and I finally had to take my super and landlord to court (Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal). I won \$1500.

I moved to a different location before finally getting into Toronto Community Housing (TCHC). I believe the reason why I got off the waiting list so fast was that I wrote them a long letter explaining that I was a single mother who had lost all my belongings due to bedbugs and that welfare couldn't help. I moved to a Toronto Community Housing owned building at 605 Whiteside Place in Regent Park. The apartment was ok except I noticed a big hole under my bathroom sink. I told the building superintendent sever-

al times to fix the hole. But they didn't and to make a long story short, I got mice. They came through the hole. Now I was MAD! I spoke to my public health nurse and she got a city inspector involved.

At the very time the inspector was visiting I was lucky to see the superintendent in the hallway. I told him that I had put in a request a year ago to get my bathroom fixed and received no response. The superintendent responded by saying, "I'm tired of cleaning up the garbage that you tenants make." The city inspector spoke to the superintendent and explained to him that the hole was a health risk and needed to be fixed or TCHC would be subject to fines. After that I was certain that TCHC would soon take action.

Weeks later the hole remained. In frustration I attempted to take TCHC to court. The court (Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal) returned my application because they said two pages were missing. Then I had to wait for my visa bill to get cleared before I could afford to resubmit my court application (they


charge \$40.00). Finally, one Saturday, when I was celebrating a family member's birthday, a maintenance team showed up at my door to fix the hole. I wasn't too happy because now my guests could not use the washroom but I wanted the hole fixed so badly that I was willing to make do with the inconvenience.

I am pleased to report that the hole got fixed. Even so there are still a number of things that need to be repaired in my apartment. For example my cupboards need replacing, I need a new stove and there are several holes around the home that need to be sealed. I don't understand, why do you have to take legal actions for landlords to fix our homes?

by
LESA JAMES (AGE 22)

Lesa James is a TCHC resident.

For steps to reporting a maintenance problem, see page 14.



Listen to Catch da Flava Radio
Live on CKLN 88.1 FM
every Tuesday at 7:30 pm

REGENTPARK.TV
informative videos documentaries short films

discover regent park
right from your computer

TCHC REPAIRS

If you have a maintenance problem in your TCHC unit, please follow these steps to ensure your problem gets resolved.

REPORT THE PROBLEM

Identify the problem and report it to Toronto Community Housing.

HOW DO I REPORT IT?

Speak to the Superintendent of your building or any member of staff that works in your building. Another avenue is through your Tenant Service Coordinator at the Community Housing Unit Office located at 19 Belshaw Place. If it is after hours, please call our Call Centre at (416) 981-5500 to report the issue, they are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

GET AN EASY TRAC NUMBER

Your request will be filed on Toronto Community Housing's Easy Trac system, and you will be given an Easy Trac Number. This number will enable both you and staff to track your request.

CONTACT US

If your request has not been followed up on, please visit your Community Housing Unit Office located at 19 Belshaw Place and request the attention of the management. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact:

Ade Davies, Community Housing Manager at (416)981-5500

GET INVOLVED

If you are interested in working with other tenants on resolving maintenance issues in Regent Park, join the Maintenance Committee. If you are interested please call:

Karima Hashmani, Health Promotion Officer at (416)981-4079

RENTAL TRIBUNAL

ONTARIO RENTAL HOUSING TRIBUNAL

On June 17th, 1998 the Landlord and Tenant Act was replaced with the Tenant Protection Act. Numerous changes resulted and among the most instrumental was the creation of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal was established for the specific purpose of resolving disputes between landlords and tenants and to also provide information to the consumer about the Tenant Protection Act.

The system resolves disputes in a less formal environment than found in provincial courts.

Landlords and tenants of most residential rental units are covered under the TPA, including high rise rental units, single family homes, basement units, rental condominiums, care homes, and mobile homes.

Some units are partially covered by the TPA, including new residential complexes, and government owned and non-profit housing units. Some accommodation is completely exempt from the TPA, including units with a kitchen or bath room shared with the owner, and temporary accommodation such as hotels and motels.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal provides information to the public through a network of 20 local offices across Ontario.

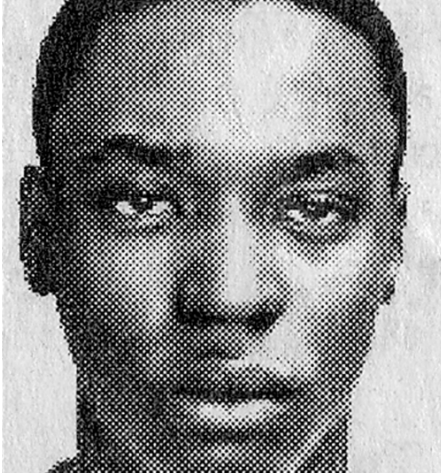
The Tribunal can be reached 24 hours a day by calling toll-free 1-888-332-3234.

A copy of the TPA can be ordered from Publications Ontario by telephoning toll-free 1-800-668 9938.

A copy of the TPA can also be obtained by visiting the Ontario Government Website at <http://www.gov.on.ca/>.

IN LOVING MEMORY

August to December 2007



KEVON HALL

Age: 19

On August 4, 2007, Kevon was slain in a midday shooting in an apartment building in Regent Park.

He was visiting a friend. No arrests have been made.

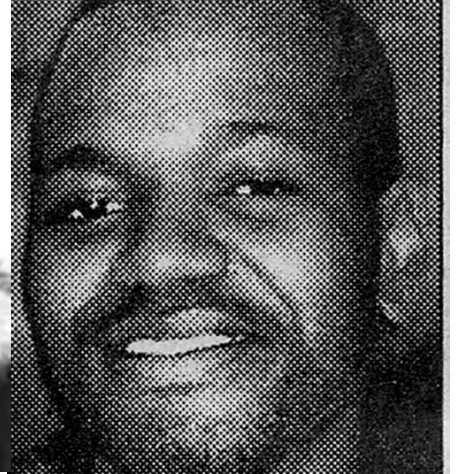


KARIM RASHID ATA-AYI

Age: 29

On December 23rd, 2007, Karim was shot and killed outside of 14 Belvins Place.

Karim was the last remaining son of Patricia Wynter. Chad Wynter, Karim's older brother was shot in 2001.



DWAYNE NORRIS CAMPBELL

Age: 27

On August 6, 2007, Kevon was shot and left in an apartment on Shuter Street, near Parliament and Queen.

No arrests have been made.



no photo available

CAROL ANN WASH

Carol died in the first week of November 2007 from cancer.

She served for many years with the former Regent Park Residents Association, and was actively involved in the campaign to establish the Regent Park Community Centre in the 70s and 80s.



ALWY AL NADHIR

Age: 18

On October 31, 2007, Alwy was shot during an altercation with police near Riverdale Park. He was taken to the hospital where he later died. The SIU is still investigating the case.

Alwy was well known and liked by workers and residents of the Regent Park Community.



RICHARD BELL

Rick died on September 18th 2007 from liver cancer.

Acceptance, accommodation and appreciation are 3 words that express why Rick will be remembered positively by those who are missing him.

He smiled a lot, enjoyed life to the fullest and loved a good laugh so in his memory he'd want others to do the same.

THE ECONOMICS OF GANG DRUG DEALING

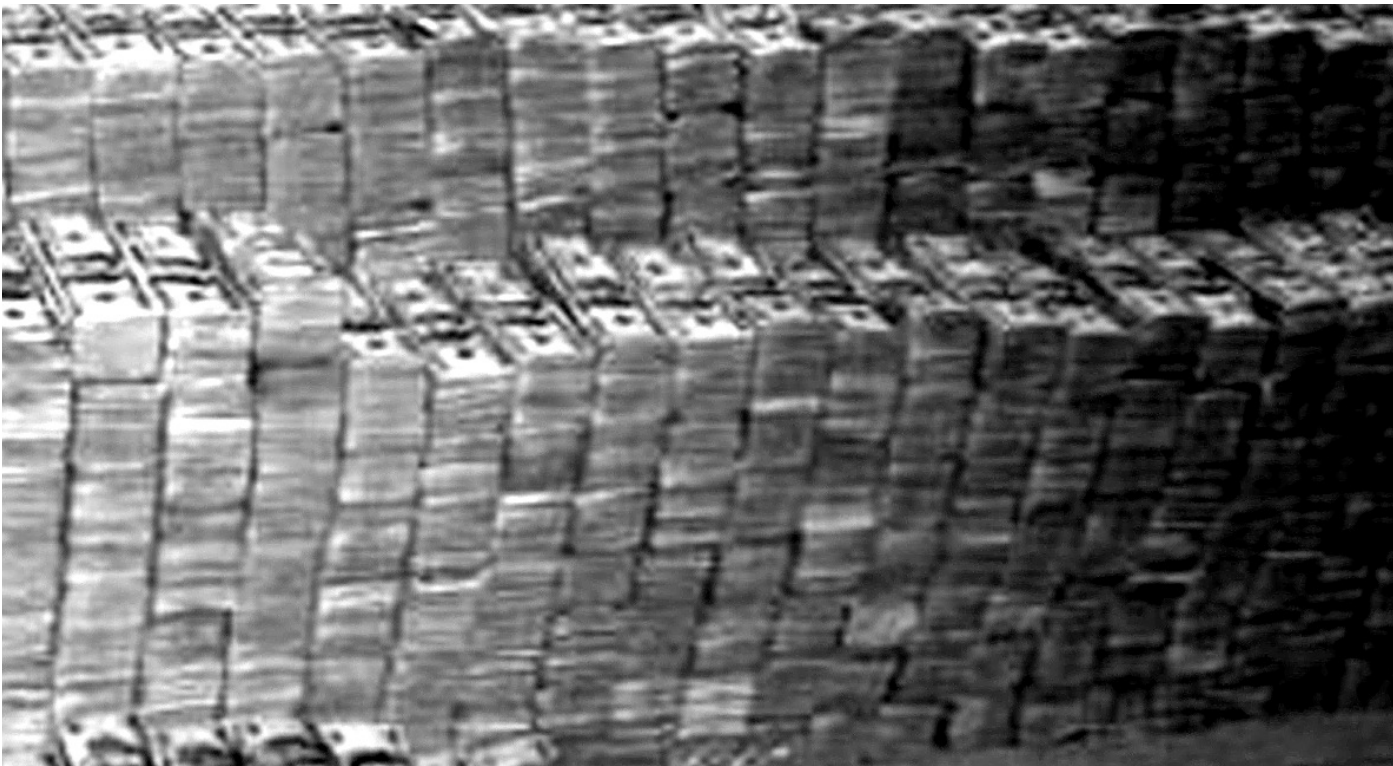


One of the most alluring ideas about the drug dealing life style is the myth of the high-rolling drug dealer. Many are first attracted to drug dealing by the potential earnings they hope to make. Movies and music videos often portray drug dealers as men with expensive jewelry and luxury cars, and with beautiful women on their arm. Unfortunately, real life does not reflect this. An American study of the cocaine finances of large 50 - 60 member street gangs by economists Steven D. Levitt and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh* showed that the majority of gang members make only slightly above minimum wage.

According to the study the workings of an innercity street gang are comparable to that of a typical fast food franchise. Leaders of gangs operate like the individual proprietor-owner of a fast food restaurant. Gang leaders must make the same decisions to grow their gangs as businesses do. These decisions include hiring and firing of employees, marketing, dealing with competition with other non-aligned gangs, etc. After paying for the wholesale cost of acquiring drugs from a supplier, gang leaders must pay wages to their gang members or employees. They must also pay for other costs of doing business. For example, gang leaders have to consider how to minimize violence since this is bad for busi-

gang leaders will often pay more in wages to induce employees to stay in the gang while violence is occurring and as much as \$5,000 in compensation to the family of a killed gang member

ness. Sales can drop up to 20-30% if customers stay away for fear of harm. Gang leaders will often pay more in wages to induce employees to stay in the gang while violence is occurring and as much as \$5,000 in compensation to the family of a killed gang member (such payments are important to maintain community support). In addition, costs for weapons and hiring of outside mercenaries have to be taken care of. Only after all these costs are paid can a gang leader claim the left over revenue as profit. Their income fluctuates greatly since they must bear all risk to the enterprise. In general, the Levitt and Vankatesh study reveals that gang leaders earn between \$50,000 - \$130,000. In good years, they can make the upper bounds of this range. In bad years, especially during gang wars, their cash-flow can be negative.



Considering their education and work experience, the study concludes that gang leaders can earn significantly more in crime than they could expect to in the legitimate sector. For gang leaders crime pays. However this is only part of the story. The vast majority of people involved in gangs are at the officer, foot soldier and rank and file levels and their income is a different story all together.

Below the gang leader are various officers that help to run the business. These can include treasurers (responsible for the liquid assets of a gang), enforcers (responsible for ensuring the safety of gang members) and runners (responsible for transporting drugs and money to and from the supplier). These are full-time, senior employees that are paid

the Levitt and Vankatesh study shows that officers in a gang have standards of living equal to those working minimum wage

wages and certain performance bonuses. They are often paid bonuses during good years and during gang wars. The Levitt and Vankatesh study shows that officers in a gang have standards of living equal to those working minimum wage. Officers earn approximately \$12,000 annually.

Below the officers are foot soldiers. These are part-time employees who conduct the day to day business of the gang. The most important task they fulfill is the actual selling of drugs to consumers. They are also sometimes called upon to fill security-type roles (i.e lookout). Foot soldiers often have regular jobs in legitimate sectors as well due to the very low wage they receive. They typically work twenty hours a week on gang related activity and make \$2,400 per year from the gang. Therefore, the study concludes, their hourly average is about \$2/hr.

Below the soldiers are the rank-and-file members. These are unpaid affiliates of the gang. They join for the benefit of gang membership (status), protection and a reliable supply of drugs for personal use or to sell independently in other neighbourhoods or places away from the gang's turf. Recruitment into the gang proper is normally from the rank-and-file. Not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

OMIGOD!
LAST SATURDAY
I HAD SO MUCH
TO DRINK

YES I KNOW

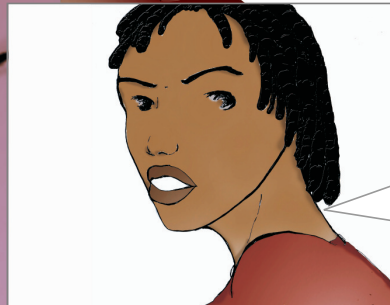


I SLEPT WITH BRIAN.
IT'S SO AWKWARD.
WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS
FOR YEARS. IT SEAMED
RIGHT AT THE PARTY.

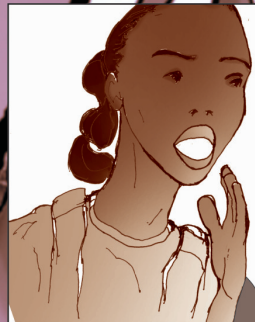
WHAAT?!!
ARE YOU KIDDING
ME? DO YOU THINK
YOU HAVE FEELINGS
FOR HIM



NO I DON'T. I LIKE HIM
AS A FRIEND I DON'T
KNOW WHETHER I CAN
EVEN BE FRIENDS WITH
HIM NOW. AARGHH
WHAT AM I GONNA DO?!



I DON'T KNOW
GIRL. NEXT TIME
MAYBE YOU SHOULD
BE AWARE OF YOUR
LIMIT WHEN YOU'RE
DRINKING.



IF YOU MUST DRINK AVOID GETTING DRUNK

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



Graphic by AJ FRICK

My first couple of days at a new high school were among the worst school days I've ever experienced. I was in grade 12 and had just recently moved into the area. When I went to the school to register the vice principal gave me a hard time. He made all sorts of comments because of the neighborhood I lived in. It seemed like he was trying to discourage me from registering.

The next day I arrived to go to my first period class. The vice principal and the cops were there to meet me. They escorted me down to the office and began asking me questions about the robbery of someone's Ipod. But I had no idea what they wanted and why I was there. They kept asking me about where I had been, who I was with and if I could confirm it. I finally called my mother and she confirmed that I was at home at the time of the incidents. Even after speaking with my mother it was clear that they didn't believe me.

The principal, vice principal, and the two cops left the room for about twenty minutes. When they returned they apologized repeatedly for accusing me of the crime. It was obvious that they had found the real culprit. But I was too mad to care about what they had to say. I didn't want to hear their apologies.

I went to class and finished my day.

Having the vice principal and police escort me from class that very first day of school was humiliating and created a bad impression with the teachers. After that day, every time there was a fight, drugs or weapons my name would always be called out as a suspect. And for months afterwards the hall monitors would follow me everywhere in the school as soon as they saw me come out of class. I tried not to let this bother me but at times it made me feel angry inside. Some time later this began to subside and the teachers became friendlier especially after I joined the school football team.

As a student, I always did my homework. I didn't get the best grades but I still tried my best. On my last days of the school year some of the teachers confessed that at first they thought I was a bad kid because of the way I looked and dressed. Only after I was a student in their class did they see me in a more positive light. I'd like to say that this experience had nothing to do with the fact that I was a young black male attending a mostly white school...but I can't.

by

JUSTIN BRADSHAW (AGE 19)

DRUG WARS



In many ways the United States drug policy has been a runaway train of unanticipated consequences and gross misfortunes. In the 1980s, while the Reagan administration was arming the Nicaraguan Contras using money partly gained from cocaine smuggled into the US, the American public was starting to question the zealousness of its so-called "War on Drugs." Fast forward to the present and while the United States busily sinks money into "border control" and slashing Mexican crops, the 2007 United Nations World Drug Report states that the US is, in fact, the #1 producer of marijuana (which is its biggest cash crop), with Mexico and Canada following close behind. Varying reports and competing interests make it nearly impossible to gather any sort of meaningful statistics, but the level of drug-related crime has certainly not diminished, as prisons push maximum capacity and more kids admit to rebelliously dabbling in dangerous substances.

some countries are treating drug abuse like a medical sickness, stripping it of its glamour

For many years Canada was seen as a progressive-yet-harmonious leader in drug policy reform; but the day Stephen Harper took office and spoke of strengthening ties with the US, Liberals knew it was only a matter of time before their intentions to decriminalize marijuana were dashed once and for all. On October 4th of this year, Harper announced his new \$63.8 million drug policy that in his words is "a balance between prevention and punishment."

"For too long in Canada, governments have been sending mixed messages on drugs. They have tacked back and forth between prohibition and liberalization so many times that Canadians hardly know what the law says anymore. It's time to be straight with Canadians, so Canadians who use drugs can get straight because narcotics destroy lives," Harper announced.

Sure, it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of raising the terror alert to orange and crushing those conniving, red-eyed, border-hopping, drug-smuggling junkies. Yet, there are so many lessons we need to learn from our Southerly neighbors before we get swept away with the tide, allowing that addi-



tional \$63.8 million to plummet down with it, to the depths of abysmal failure.

MYTH # 1: Draconian Punishment and Scare Tactics Really Work!

Since Conservatives squashed the decriminalization of marijuana bill, drug arrests increased from 20% to 50% in 2006 in Toronto, Vancouver, Halifax and Ottawa.

It's well known that scare tactic ads and social taboos do very little to change the public's perception of drug use. Instead their strategies encourage teenagers to latch onto substance abuse as a form of rebellion. Take for example the relaxed policy on alcohol in Europe, where children are allowed a glass of wine with meals at any age. They have far less problems with regard to alcoholism and drunk driving accidents than North Americans. Interestingly, to change public perception, some European countries are treating drug abuse like a medical sickness, rather than a crime, thus stripping it of its glamour and allure. Since heroin was decriminalized in Switzerland, heroin abuse (now viewed as a "loser

it's well known that scare tactic ads and social taboos do very little to change the public's perception of drug use

drug") has plummeted nearly 80% in Zurich over the last decade.

The real problem with the US and Canadian control policies is that they aim to hunt down dealers and growers but do little to reintegrate ex-users and ex-dealers back into society. Not only are people removed from education and work situations, but with felony or misdemeanor drug charges in one's background, there are few future job opportunities available.

MYTH # 2: \$63.8 Million is a LOT of Money!

While allotting more money is certainly a step in the right direction, conservatives are expecting miracles if they think crime will plummet from this meager

increase.

The \$63.8 million hike (over a two year period) is a far cry from the additional \$1.2 billion the US will spend this year. Last year we spent \$33.2 million on our drug policy - in comparison the Netherlands, with roughly half the population of Canada, spent over \$3 billion.

MYTH # 3: Harm Reduction Only Encourages Drug Use

Harm reduction methods seek to minimize damage and treat drug use like more of a medical affliction rather than a glamorous social taboo. Sweden has been praised by the United Nations for its predominant focus on prevention and demand reduction, which has resulted in drug use just one-third the European average. Currently, Vancouver is setting the Canadian precedent by testing out "safe needle" clinics, psychological therapy, detox facilities and housing assistance for recovering addicts. These services are offered in an effort to tackle some of the social issues that plague drug abusers.

Stephen Harper called harm reduction "a second-best strategy at best" and went on to say, "If you remain a drug addict, I don't care how much harm you reduce, you're going to have a short and miserable life."

MYTH # 4: If You Crush the Supply, You'll Crush the Demand!

A moment ago, we were talking about social issues affecting drug abusers. This also ties into the supply-and-demand myth. The US funneled \$5 billion to Colombia over a seven year span in an effort to stamp out coca (where cocaine comes from), however, plant production rose 8% last year and corruption runs wild. In fact, as they burned plants in Columbia, neighbors Peru and Bolivia stepped up to the plate to meet the demand.

The Columbian government adamantly stresses the importance of opening and facilitating trade (like in mining and oil) to allow the country to compete in the global market and thus find a way of making money outside of the illicit drug trade. By working towards eliminating the factors that cause drug abuse (like poverty, joblessness, boredom, poor education or family dysfunction), the demand will subsequently go down.

"If you remain a drug addict, I don't care how much harm you reduce, you're going to have a short and miserable life."

-Stephen Harper

THE GOOD NEWS

Despite our emphasis on maximizing prison sentences and eagerness to engage in "high profile border busts", we are allotting an almost equal amount of funding toward treatment for recovering addicts, which may be a small ray of hope. The increased funding is a promising sign too, even though the Vancouver harm reduction clinics say it would take "50 to 100 years to treat the addicts we have today" with the current budget. While we may have to scrape the bottom of the barrel for a positive spin on the alarming direction of Harper's drug policy, it seems that Canada is actively seeking solutions. "Tackling the problem of drug use is going to take all of us," said the PM optimistically. "Breaking Canada's drug habit will require a huge effort. But as of today our country is on the road to recovery."

by

JENNN FUSION (AGE 24)

Catch Da Flava Radio

& Youth Newspaper Print

88.1 FM

"Host and produce a weekly youth radio talk show.
Be a journalist for our Youth Newspaper"

Come Out Every Tuesday at 6:00 PM - 8:00PM



**Hear the radio show on
Tuesdays at 7:30 PM
on CKLN 88.1 FM**

HARM REDUCTION CLINICS



Government sponsored harm reduction clinics were first established in Amsterdam in 1984, initially to stop the outbreak of Hepatitis A. Health officials there recognized that heroin users were frequently sharing syringes. As a result of one user's infection, Hepatitis A and other diseases were being spread to other users through the reuse of syringes contaminated with infected blood. In response to this problem the government began working with user groups to make sterile syringes available to IV drug users. They also established clinics where drugs could be consumed under supervision.

Those that embrace harm reduction approaches argue that abstinence is unachievable and that drug use will always be an issue. Therefore as a society we must figure out a way to reduce potential dangers and health risks associated with drug use. For example, we know that thousands of people die each year from driving while under the influence of alcohol. Yet we don't say, "Don't drink" we say, "Don't drink and drive".

Studies have proven that harm reduction approaches reduce mortality, curb the spread of disease, and

help people who are addicted to drugs gain control of their lives and feel comfortable accessing health care services. In Toronto, Harm Reduction Clinics that offer needle exchanges or methadone treatments are controversial. This is because drug addiction in North American society is still viewed primarily as a crime rather than as a health issue. If more resources were dedicated to harm reduction approaches there would be less need for jails.

To conclude, harm reduction clinics provide realistic alternatives to drug use based on science, compassion, public health and human rights. Isn't it time we supported it?

by
NAYA JOHN (AGE 20)

PRESSURE TO BE UNIQUELY THE SAME



High school is one of the most complicated times in a teenager's life. The schoolwork is brutal, the teachers don't care if you succeed and worst of all is the peer pressure from your classmates.

The pressure from other students in high school affect people in different ways. Some students take on a completely different lifestyle just to fit in, others choose not to fit in at all and are discriminated by the "in" crowd for it and others just can never seem to fit in however hard they try and whatever way they dress, act or look. Peer pressure is a big problem, but is it fixable?

As a new senior attending Oakwood Collegiate I have seen all this happen first hand. I have been around people who have spent the last three years changing themselves trying to fit in and in the process becoming something that they are not. In some situations it has made me lose friends that I was once very close to. The thing is, that everyone is affected by peer pressure in high school and I am no exception. Some people even stop doing what they love just to fit in. I think this is the worst element of peer pressure. No one should be able to affect you in a way that you feel that you cannot

no one should be able to affect you in a way that you feel that you cannot continue doing something that you love

continue doing something that you love. I have never experienced that happen to any close friends or me but I have seen people stop doing things they love just because the group of friends that they hang out with aren't into the same thing. This is when you have to ask yourself, is this worth it? Luckily for me my hobbies (hockey, skateboarding and guitar) are quite accepted and are not anything unusual. Although I'm occasionally hassled for skating at school, I am not alone as there are quite a few other skaters at my school. But other students have hobbies that are not always considered normal but they still do them. These are the exceptional students - they have the strength to do what they enjoy even if it means not being the most popular student in school.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

BINGE DRINKING



Graphic by AJ FRICK

Binge drinking is generally defined as consuming 5 or more standard drinks for men and 4 or more for women, on a single occasion. To most people however binge drinking is viewed as excessive, self-destructive drinking. This is because binge drinking is linked to negative consequences such as squandering money, obnoxious or anti-social behavior, fighting and violence, vomiting, loss of consciousness, alcohol related accidents, unprotected sex and vulnerability to being coerced into sexual activity. Regular binge drinking can also contribute to poor academic performance. Alcohol poisoning is the most life-threatening consequence of binge drinking. Alcohol poisoning is the result of drinking too much alcohol in too short a time. When your body absorbs too much alcohol, it can directly impact your central nervous system, slowing your breathing, heart rate and gag reflex. This can lead to choking, coma and even death.

Unfortunately too many young people view binge drinking as 'fun' and something that enhances their social interactions with their peers. This attitude explains why binge drinking often occurs in group settings where getting drunk to a point of complete loss of control is not only accepted but also encouraged.

According to the results of the 2005 Ontario Student Drug Use Survey (OSDUS) released by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), sixteen percent of grade 7 - 12 students reported drinking at a hazardous level and twenty-three per cent of students reported binge drinking (consuming at least 5 drinks on the same occasion) at least once during the month before the survey. What is even more alarming is that fourteen per cent of students who are licensed drivers continue to drink and drive and over one-quarter (29%) of all students report being a passenger with a driver who had been drinking. Furthermore, research indicates that binge drinking among university students is much higher.

Based on these statistics it is evident that our schools and universities need to do more to educate students on the harms associated with binge drinking and get the message out that drinking to a point of complete loss of control is unacceptable and dangerous.

by
JAMAL PAISLEY (AGE 17)

PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS



Picture courtesy of Sony

Happiness means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. However for some people it means attaining a secure place to live and not worrying where the next meal is coming from and that's the plot behind the movie Pursuit of Happyness.

Pursuit of Happyness is an Academy Award-nominated 2006 drama based on the true story of Chris Gardner. Chris Gardner (played by actor Will Smith) and his wife Linda (played by actor Thandie Newton) live together with their five-year old son Christopher Jr. (played by Will Smith real life son Jadin Smith), in a poor San Francisco neighborhood apartment. Both Linda and Chris are working African American parents who are struggling to make ends meet. Chris sells specialized medical equipment to private health clinics and only earns income when he makes a sell. Unfortunately Chris doesn't make a lot of sales and as a result brings very little income into the family. One day Chris meets a stock broker and is inspired to make a career change. Chris applies to a six month training internship program with a prestigious stock brokerage firm. He manages to get accepted but is surprised to discover that the full time internship offers no pay. Instead he must face

an examination and compete with the other 20 new interns to obtain a chance for the one lucrative full time career position that the company is offering. Despite not having an income Chris feels that this is the break he was looking for and he is determined to succeed.

Linda, who works 12-hour days (double shifts), does not share his confidence. Fed up with living in poverty and shouldering the bulk of all the family's expenses, she decides to separate and move to New York to work in a new restaurant that her sister is opening. She wants to take their son Christopher Jr. with her but Chris refuses to allow her to. Linda relents, perhaps intending to get custody of her son after she is settled. She leaves for New York alone. This means that Chris must now take on the full responsibility of raising their six-year old son while balancing the demands of a full time internship. As a result of not earning any money he and his son soon get kicked out of their apartment for non-payment of rent. Chris and his son must now find refuge in church run homeless shelters. As a consequence of being homeless Chris' life is forever chaotic. Nevertheless he struggles to cope.

Each evening, because of the lack of homeless shelters in the city, Chris and his son must endure long line-ups with hundreds of other people of colour in need of food and bedding for the night. When the shelters are full, which is often, Chris and his son are forced to use what limited funds they have staying in cheap motels. When he is completely broke they are forced to suffer the humiliation of sleeping in train station bathrooms and on some occasions even underneath his desk at the firm's office. Every minute of the day seems like a struggle. Each morning Chris drops Christopher Jr. off at the crowded and poorly supervised private day care called Happyness for which the movie is named.

"The most painful thing in the world is to leave your son someplace you are not comfortable with but that you can afford. The most painful thing for me to say was I'll be back,"

said real-life Chris Gardner recalling the day care in an interview with George Strombolopoli on the August 20, 2007 segment of The Hour-CBC.

At the firm Chris works through breaks and lunches and comes up with all sorts of creative strategies to try to match the productivity of his co-workers to make up for leaving early to pick up his son from daycare and find food and lodgings for the night. After his son is asleep Chris studies well into the night for his upcoming exams. On the weekends Christopher accompanies his father in trying to sell the medical equipment (a sample of which never leaves their side) their only source of income for food. As if all this was not enough, at the brokerage firm Chris must deal with racism from some of his firm's clients who after conversing on the phone are shocked to learn that he is black. Chris is also forced to suffer humiliation from a junior manager who seems to feel that Chris doesn't have the educational background or intellect to pass the intensive exams or make it in the industry and as a result doesn't treat him with the same level of respect as the other white interns.

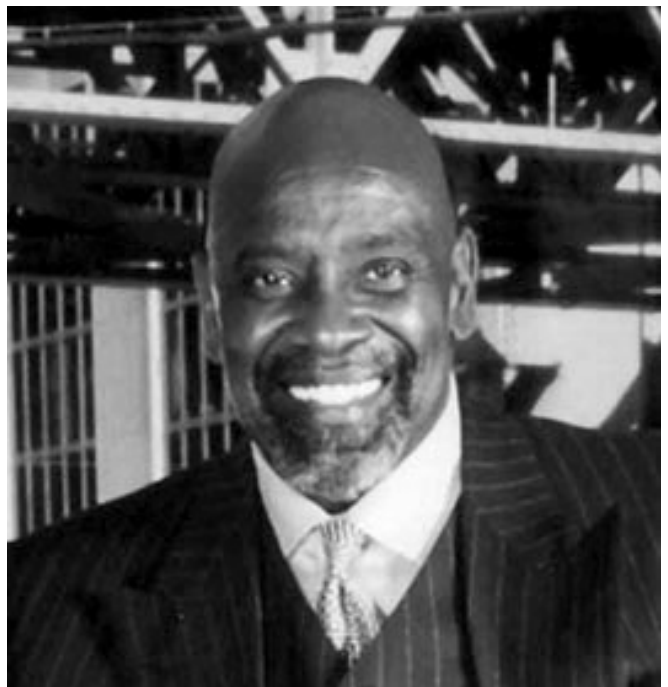
One of the most poignant scenes in the film occurs when the head of the corporation pulls up in a cab just as Chris is arriving to work. Due to the fact that he has no small bills in his wallet, the obviously wealthy head of the firm asks Chris to 'borrow' a five

dollar bill to pay for the cab completely oblivious to Chris's situation of poverty. Ashamed to say no, Chris offers up his last five dollars. For the audience the five dollars symbolizes the separateness of the two worlds that Chris and his boss inhabit. While the boss may never recall the incident, the loss of the five dollars to Chris means that instead of taking the bus he will now have to run across town to pick up his son and rush to earn a place in the shelter's line up so that they can eat and have a bed for the night.

Finally the day of the exams arrive. Only those who score high on the exam and exceed all the others in meeting their sale quotas will be offered a position in the prestigious firm. Chris' hard work and determination pay off. Not only does he ace the exams, but he out-performs all of the other interns, winning the position. Today, real-life Chris Gardner runs a multi-million dollar brokerage company.

Setting aside the film's feel good message that "everyone can succeed if they put their mind to it", the movie raises a lot of unanswered questions about poverty, institutional racism and social justice and shows in a personal way how these issues impact on a single family.

by da Flava's
ADONIS HUGGINS



real-life Chris Gardner

LEARN FROM MY MISTAKE



I've always said you should live life with no regrets but I think everyone has something in their life that they wished had happened differently and that's how people learn. Well, there's not many things that I regret in my life but there is one thing that I think about everyday.

When I was about seventeen years old I was in an abusive relationship with this guy for six years. One of the things that happened to me is that I got forced into getting a tattoo of his name on my lower stomach. I knew I was going to regret it because I always said to my friends that the stupidest thing to do is to get some person's name tattooed on your body, unless it's your child's name of course. At the time, however, I felt like I had no choice but to get it done.

We broke up a year later and I'm now stuck looking at his name everyday. Every time I look down I feel sick and I start to cry because of the things he put me through. I try not to think about it but it's so hard to see it everyday. I've looked into tattoo removal options but they are all very expensive and I don't have that kind of money right now. I can't get it covered up because I would have to get something

big and dark and I don't really want to do that.

This whole experience hasn't just hurt me it's affected my current relationship. Even though my new boy friend says it doesn't matter, I know it does. It's hard not to get bothered by it. He knows what I had to deal with and the problems that relationship caused for me and my family. The way I look at it is that it was a really big mistake that can be fixed. It might take some time but it can be removed. Until that day I just have to deal with it.

This whole thing has made me realize not to let anyone push you around and to stand up for yourself! So I guess the whole point of me writing this is so other people can learn from this because I know I learned a lot.

by
CW (AGE 19)

HOME SWEET HOME *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7*

where. Even in the homes of the poorest of the poor, there is a determined effort to live with dignity. If the conditions people have to put up with weren't such a travesty, the sight of their attempts to nevertheless make a home is inspiring.

The year of the homeless has come and gone but sadly unless governments are willing to take action the homelessness crisis will remain with us for many years to come.

by
HEATHER RICHARDS
and da flava's ADONIS HUGGINS

PEER PRESSURE *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24*

The way students dress is a large part of peer pressure. Quite often in grade nine students will be judged by how they look because they are new and the easiest way to think you know someone is by looking at their clothes. This is the stupidest part of high school. Just because some kid walks into class with a off coloured baseball hat and a XL basketball jersey doesn't make him tough and just because someone walks in dressed all in black and with black lipstick doesn't make them suicidal. Clothes are a deception, and if you hide your true self behind expensive clothes you are a victim of peer pressure yourself.

I have a great deal of respect for people that do their own thing. I think that it takes a lot of courage to go to school and disregard all the "pressures" of high school. It is these people who will have a great effect on the world in the future. If you seem not to be able to fit in no matter how hard you're trying here's a little help. Stop trying. If the people you're trying to impress don't take you for who you are, then you shouldn't be hanging out with them anyway.

by
SASHA MOLOTKOW (AGE 17)

ECONOMICS *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17*

only do rank-and-file members receive no payment but they are often expected to pay dues to the gang.

Levitt and Venkatesh speculate that low-level gang members enter into gangs mainly because of the desire to ascend the gang hierarchy and the expectation of making money. However, the odds are very much against them. In addition to low wages, the typical gang member faces a much higher risk of work-related injuries and fatalities then they would

in a legitimate job. Over a four year period, the Levitt and Venkatesh study shows that 1/4 of all gang members died due to gang related violence including internal conflicts. Statistically, the typical gang member will suffer on average two non-fatal injuries (gun-shots, stabbings, etc.) over their lifetime. This number increases during periods of gang wars.

The Levitt and Venkatesh study leads us to conclude that the likelihood of getting rich from gang involvement and drug dealing is extremely low. In fact as a gang member it's far more likely that you will end up scraping by on minimum wage.

By da Flava's
SAM LAO (AGE 24)

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH WITH SUBSTANCE USE ISSUES

CENTRE FOR ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH (CAMH) YOUTH ADDICTION SERVICES PROGRAM

(416) 535-8501 ext.1730 (Youth Intake Line)

Youth 16-24 years with substance use issues,
with or without a mental health diagnosis *
assessment and outpatient counselling *
individual and group counselling
www.camh.net

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM FOR AFRICAN CANADIAN & CARIBBEAN YOUTH

(416) 535-8501 ext. 7055

For youth 13-24 years in the African-Canadian
and Caribbean communities * individual and
group counselling * family support * early
intervention and prevention services
www.camh.net

YSAP (YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM/YMCA)

(416) 504-1710 ext. 206

Counselling and education for youth 16-24 *
non-residential treatment * assessment*crisis
intervention* counselling * outreach
www.ymcatoronto.org

THE NEW GIRL

IAIN LEW KEE



A NEW HOME AND A NEW LIFE IN TORONTO. CANADA IS VERY NICE. AND MY MOTHER SAYS I SHOULD TRY TO MEET NEW FRIENDS MY OWN AGE.



IT ALL STARTED AT SCHOOL, WHEN I DECIDED TO GO TO A PARTY...



HEY! COOL SCARF! GETTING READY FOR THE TOGA PARTY TONIGHT?



A WHAT? OH YEAH IT'S GOING TO BE SO WILD!

OH, IT'S A HIJAB...

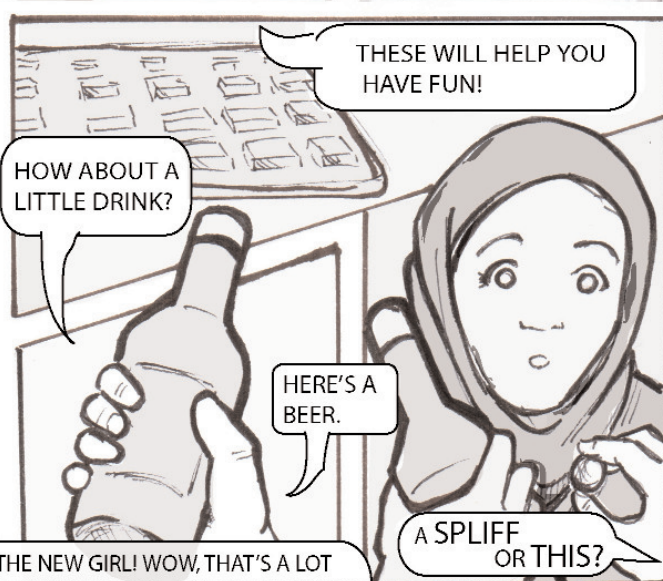
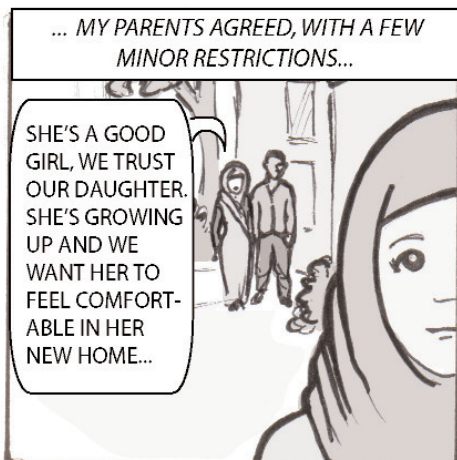


TOGA HOUSE PARTY? THIS COULD BE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO MEET SOME NEW FRIENDS... I'M SURE IT'LL BE ALRIGHT WITH MY PARENTS... TOGA PARTY... BYOB?



EXCUSE ME, WHAT IS B.Y.O.B?





HEY, YOU'RE THE NEW GIRL! WOW, THAT'S A LOT OF...STUFF YOU'VE GOT THERE. ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN HANDLE IT? BE CAREFUL, IT CAN MAJORLY ALTER YOUR PERSPECTIVE... PERSONALLY, WE'RE NOT INTO THIS, YOU KNOW? **WE HAVE A CHOICE.**



IAIN LEW KEE 2007

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS



DRUG AWARENESS WEEK AT NELSON MANDELA PARK P.S.

On November 8, Regent Park Focus was at Nelson Mandela Park Public School watching some RPTV films about drugs with the students. They really enjoyed it, especially when they saw their friends on the big screen. Watching the videos got them thinking about different drug related issues. Later in the month, Focus hosted a panel of speakers in two assemblies for student in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8. Speakers included an RCMP officer, an addictions worker from CAMH and a former drug user.



COMMUNITY RALLY AND MARCH AGAINST VIOLENCE

On October 18th 200 people participated in a community rally and march against violence. The march, which started in front of the Dreamer's Peace Garden, was organized by School Community Action Alliance for Regent Park (SCAARP). SCAARP is a network of neighborhood schools and agencies serving the Regent Park area. To see video footage about the event visit Regent Park TV at www.regentpark.tv



MAYOR'S COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARD PRESENTED TO REGENT PARK TV

5 different community groups and organizations that work with youth around safety, in the Greater Toronto Area have been awarded the 2007 Mayor's Community Safety Award. Regent Park TV (RPTV) was proud to be one of the the 5 winners!

RPTV youth reporter and editor Saeema accepted the award on behalf of all the RPTV participants and staff. The award was presented by Mayor David Miller, City TV journalist Dwight Drummond, a representative from Bell Canada, City Councilor Pam McConnell and Deputy Award Chief Keith Forde. Serve Canada, based in Regent Park, also received an award.

ONE COLE STREET

Construction started in September 2007 on the phase one condominium building at Parliament and Dundas. Known as "One Cole," this development consists two buildings (9 and 19 storeys).

One Cole will also house a bank, grocery store and coffee retailer. Occupancy is scheduled for spring of 2009. One Cole is named after Pat Cole, an advocate for the former Regent Park Tenant's Association.