

## Arts and Activism



### Reclaiming Our Space

What dominates the majority of busy streets in downtown Toronto? Not trees, not buildings, and during many hours of the day, not even cars or people. What populates these roads in epidemic proportions are ads. From bus shelters and billboards to posters and pamphlets, corporate imagery saturates the horizon with artificial colour and pollutes peoples' minds with subliminal orders to consume.

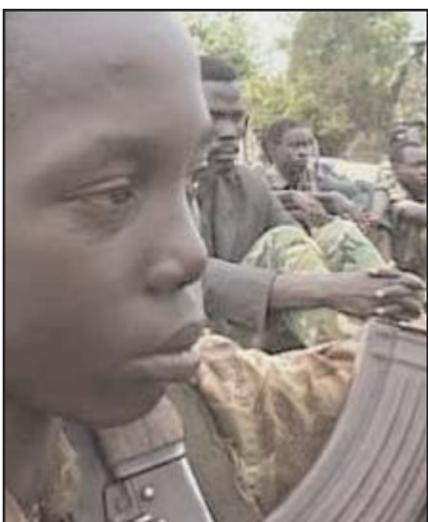
One group that has made it their goal to cure the city of this space-consuming sickness is the Toronto Public Space Committee (TPSC). The TPSC was founded in 2001 by a group of activists who were passionate about forming a united front against the commercial displays that sprawl across Toronto. They are heading a fierce campaign against large corporations who bombard us with ads on walls and streets that are shared by Torontonians. According to the TPSC, these are public spaces and should therefore be places for public expression.

The TPSC and their projects effectively attack the problem of space-intrusion on various fronts. For example, Guerrilla Gardening is a campaign to reclaim neglected places by getting volunteers to plant greenery in abandoned areas such as parking lots and empty laneways. The Downtown De-fence Project aims to increase public space by offering free fence removal for homeowners (if you are interested in using this service, call 416-88-WATER). Finally, the TPSC challenges posters and billboards through Art Attack and Variance Vexation. Art Attack provides volunteers with materials to cover bus shelter ads with personal art, and Variance Vexation is a project led by citizens and members of the TPSC to lobby the City Council to stop corporations from breaking bylaws by posting overlarge billboards in public spaces.

More recently, the TPSC began publishing a magazine called Spacing which focuses on their campaigns and the concerns that they address. The first issue is forty pages long with four pages of colour and features articles on public art and the corporate propaganda taking over Yonge Street and Dundas Square...

*Continued on page 4*

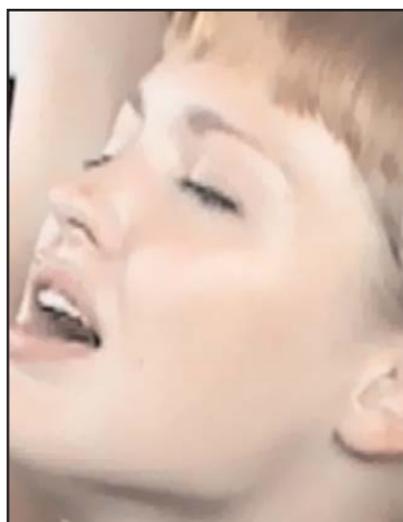
*Ultimately it is in the streets that power must be dissolved: for the streets is where daily life is endured, suffered and eroded, and where power is confronted and fought, must be turned into the domain where daily life is enjoyed, created and nourished.* (Reclaiming the Streets)



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A Young Man's Story**  
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**Oops.....Oh My !!!  
Sexpert**  
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## Missing

*If conscious thoughts were processed and slowed they would tumble through our minds in a steady funneled stream, like the sentences that flow before our dry, shifting eyes when we try to decipher what we read. By trapping every supposition, we would know our exact circumstance at any time; every notion that shapes us and what it means.*

*We could deduce the nature of our souls, be attuned to every lie*

*and grasp the nuances of every dream.*

*There is a catch, though:*

*when we are so aware oh "Who am I?"*

*what is truly beautiful in life remains unseen.*

*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 20,  
University of Toronto*

## Are You a Poet?

Submit a poem to  
Catch da Flava Newspaper

[catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com)

## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

*"da Flava represents the diversity of youth who live in Regent Park and the city beyond."*

Catch da Flava is a student and community youth newspaper that is published a minimum of four times a year. The newspaper is distributed FREE to schools, libraries and community groups across downtown Toronto.

The newspaper is produced by the Catch da Flava youth editorial committee of the Regent Park Focus Community Coalition.

Catch da Flava welcomes letters and submissions from young people (up to age 24). Submissions should be no longer than 500 words in length. If you would like more information about how you can contribute to Catch da Flava, call us at (416) 863-1074.

**NEXT DEADLINE FOR  
SUBMISSIONS IS:  
November 30, 2003  
Circulation: 10,000**

**Catch Da Flava reserves the right to  
edit submitted articles for space  
and clarification.**

**Published Since 1995**

# Guest Editorial



I will never forget my first day in Canada. I was greeted with strangeness. The language was strange and the customs were different than those in my homeland of Naning Guang Xi, China. My first impression was that Canada was a cold country, and it was not because of the weather. It felt like things that are valued in China, such as courtesy and respect, were not taken seriously in Canada. I also felt like everything in Canada lacked in meaning.

The most memorable experience in Canada so far was my first day of school in the Canadian education system. It wasn't memorable because it was a positive experience, it was the total opposite of that. I felt awkward when I tried to learn English and I dreaded the thought of going to English class. I felt so uncomfortable and left out of classroom activities because there was no place for me to communicate in the only language I knew. I always thought to myself "Why do we have to speak English in Canada?" At first, learning English was difficult but that soon changed.

I've been in Canada for a year-and-a-half now and my English has greatly improved. Since I know more English and I'm confident in speaking it, I'm starting to love Canada more and more. I believe that the key to my increasing enjoyment of Canada was learning English. So, my message to new Canadians who don't know English is that if you work hard and study English, you will not only learn the language more quickly, but you will feel more comfortable living in Canada.

No matter how comfortable I am in Canada, there will be things that I will always miss about China. As soon as I arrived in Canada, I started to miss my relatives. The one I miss the most is my older cousin. My older cousin is the one who taught me how to have fun. He taught me how to use the computer and how to play computer games. The best times were when we would spend hours playing together. It was a great relationship that can't be replaced.

The second thing I miss dearly is Chinese food, not the half-assed Chinese food that's made in Toronto, but real Chinese food. In Naning, there is a traditional noodle that we eat called "Old Friend Noodles."

The noodles are served in a broth that is very flavourful as well as very sour but at the same time hot and spicy. The name "Old Friend Noodles" comes from a traditional story that has been told in Naning for many years. The story goes like this:

A Cantonese cook went to our city to meet his old friend. When the cook arrived at his friend's house, he found that his friend was ill. So, the cook made his "old friend" some noodles that were spicy enough to make his friend sweat out the sickness. Soon enough, the cook's friend got better and they were able to enjoy each other's company.

Besides missing my family and Old Friend noodles, there are some things in Canada that I am grateful for. For instance, I can get a free education and I am fortunate to have met a lot of people who are very friendly and enthusiastic about life. However, like any other place on the planet, there are some teenagers that are very mean and spiteful. I quickly found out that when one of your peers doesn't like you, they can make everyone hate you. I also experienced that a lot of the young people I encountered lied a lot and it seemed that they are allergic to telling the truth. In China, lying is dishonourable and is totally unacceptable. However, in Toronto, lying seems to be the norm.

My first encounter with a liar in Toronto happened on a hot summer night in July 2002. It was 9 p.m. and usually I'm inside my house at this time but on this night, my friend and I decided to go to a house party to have some fun. The party was going great until I felt someone hit me on the back. I turned around and asked the guy why he hit me and that's when things turned for the worst.

"You pushed me first" said the teenager angrily.

Confused, I told the teen that he must be mistaken and that I didn't touch anyone. All of a sudden, the teen got enraged and said "You want to fight you faggot? You must be brave to push me like that!"

At this point I felt it was time to leave the party before things escalated. As I left the party, the infuriated teenager followed me outside, walked up to my face and said "give me your money." I stepped back and told him that I didn't want to fight, but that didn't mean much because before I could finish my sentence, the teen had already punched me in my face. That's when the fight began.

*continued on page 11...*



VOLUME 8 ISSUE 2  
FALL 2003

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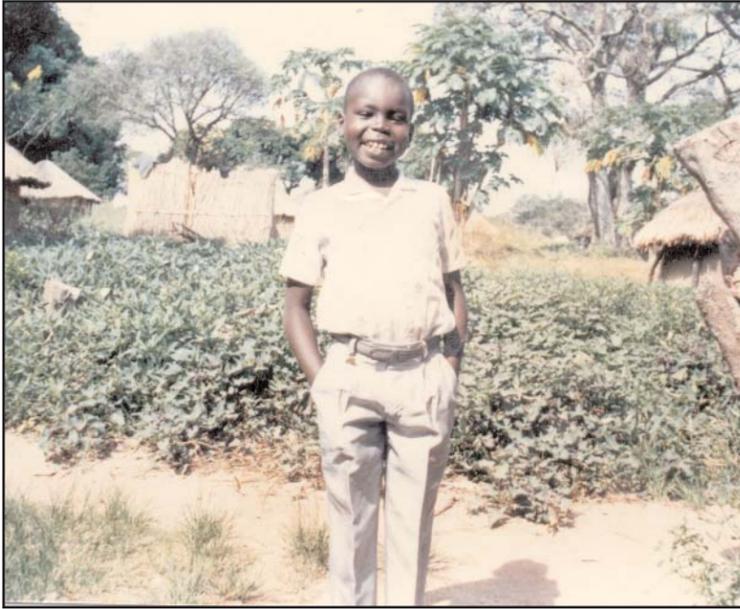
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# Global Struggles

## Rebels With A Cause

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. The country is ruled by a military government lead by President General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who took power by a military coup in 1989. Currently, Sudan is involved in a civil war. The civil war has been going on for the last 50 years. The Sudan government located in the north, wants to make Sudan an Islamic state. However they are opposed by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army which represents the interests of people living in the south, most of whom are Christian or practice more traditional religions. Here is the story of how the war has affected my family and my journey to Canada.



had been going on for the last forty years it had not affected our lives and my memories of growing up in Juba were happy ones.

This was all to change on one early morning in 1990 while my dad was away on a business trip in the North. It was about 4 am and I was still sleeping when suddenly my mother awoke me. Soldiers had arrived and were ordering everyone in the neighbourhood into the back of vehicles. We had to leave immediately and all I was able to grab was my favourite jacket. I was never to see my home again. When we arrived at our destination, a huge church in the middle of the city, I was amazed to see how many people there were. There were thousands.

There were also soldiers everywhere I looked. I was nine years old at the time and to me the soldiers looked really scary. Many of the soldiers had scars on their faces and I guessed correctly that it was for some religious purpose. I learned later that these scary looking men were soldiers from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army who were in retreat and were evacuating the city in preparation of an attack from government troops.

frantically searched everywhere and had even appealed to the SPLA authorities for help.

Once reunited my family travelled to a town further away from the fighting to await the arrival of my father. After several weeks of waiting, we received word that the government would not allow my father to join us and that we were to travel to Kampala, Uganda to wait for him there. Luckily the Uganda people were friendly and generous and helped us with our food and lodging. We even attended school there! After several months of living in poverty in a small house on Uganda, I awoke one day to the happy laughter of my father who had arrived with documents for our family's emigration to Canada. It was joyous moment. Our family had escaped the war.

Twelve years ago my family and I lived in Juba, a large city in southern Sudan. Living in Sudan during my childhood was a paradise for me. Both of my parents had great jobs. My father was an executive at a large engineering company and often travelled the country designing and building factories, schools, etc. My mother was a teacher at an elementary school that I attended. We lived in a huge house that many people considered a mansion. My dad had two cars and we had many maids to help with the chores around the house, and to take care of me, my two brothers and my three sisters. We also had a few gardeners to help keep the large gardens in the front and backyards looking fabulous. Although the civil war

The soldiers ordered all the people out of the city. In the mass confusion I got separated from my family. I cried out for them and looked everywhere but all I could see was a mass of people. I was scared, alone and didn't know what to do. Fortunately my uncle and his family happened to be passing and pulled me from the crowd. I travelled with my uncle and his family to a refugee camp. I arrived tired and hungry. There were thousands of people and not enough food, or shelter to feed or house us all. And more people were arriving by the minute! But all I could think about was whether I would see my mother, brothers and sisters again. We had stayed at the refugee camp for a few days when, with the help of neighbours, my mother found me. I later learned that she had



da Flava's Emmanuel Kedini, 22

**MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

**PSA Video Script Competition**

Film, write or draw a short public service announcement on a issue that you are concerned about

**Top Scripts Wins \$100**

Submit your script by April 15th, 2004 to your local participating school office or submit to Regent Park Focus 600 Dundas Street East (rear basement) Call: 416-863-1074 www.catchdaflava.com

## Make Your Voice Heard!!!

### PSA Competition

Regent Park Focus is producing a series of Video Public Service Announcements on issues that are important to youth. We need your help. Tell us what pisses you off? Create a short PSA script communicating your message about the issue. If your script is selected for production you can win \$100.00 cash.

Submission deadline is April 15, 2004.

For more information contact Regent Park Focus at 416-863-1074 or email us at [catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com).

# Community in Action

*Continued from cover*

...as well as a cover story on the anti-postering bylaw that the city proposed a year-and-a-half ago that would make pasting posters on poles illegal. The TPSC believes that by banning posters, the voices of minorities would be smothered by large companies that can afford to buy the space to erect posters and promote their products and ideas. Meanwhile, the ability of individuals and smaller community organizations to express themselves would be hindered. In addition to supporting community postering, the TPSC also advocates graffiti and mural art. In their view, street art is a healthy outlet for creative expression and would deter people from tagging mailboxes and committing other petty acts of vandalism.

The TPSC proves that a small group of determined people can implement change not only within their community, but city-wide. The TPSC acknowledges that the majority of their activists come from privileged backgrounds but it is the marginalized citizens who need public space the most. The organization encourages all people to educate themselves on, if not participate in, the reclaiming of Toronto's public space. Further informa-



tion on their group and current activities can be found at [www.publicspace.ca](http://www.publicspace.ca). Also, their Web site will be posting a gallery of public art in January, and everyone is encouraged to contribute pictures by sending them via e-mail to [info@publicspace.ca](mailto:info@publicspace.ca).

After all, as an increasing number of people and commercial venues crowd into this city, it is important to remain aware of their effect on the space Torontonians inhabit, since it is ultimately up to them to keep their environment clear of corporate contamination.

*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 20,  
University of Toronto*



Above: TPSC's "Art Attacks" in Toronto

## 151st Anniversary Nelson Mandela Park Public School



On Saturday February 7, 2004 Nelson Mandela Park Public School celebrated its 151st Birthday. It is the oldest school in Toronto still standing on its original site. This day was very special to former students, teachers and community members who came together to share their stories. The festivities held performance by Ebu Thompson, Lilian Allen, Park school choir, and many more.



# Community in Action

## Activism through Art: Take a Ride in a Peace Taxi

Racial discrimination is an ongoing problem in North American society, especially in light of recent events such as 9/11 and the war on terrorism. Since these events, those most adversely affected by hate-crimes and prejudice are visible minorities from South and East Asian backgrounds. This is why immediately after the 9/11 crisis, numerous cab-drivers in New York City began donning American flags on their persons in order to safeguard their livelihood and themselves from potential racial attacks. This injustice spurred an ambitious art-installation project called Peace Taxi. This unique exhibition was conceived by Rashami Varma and Rachel Kalpana James of the South Asian Visual Arts Collective (SAVAC) in Toronto.

The aim of Peace Taxi was to bring cross-cultural artists, cab-drivers and the public together to promote cultural diversity and denounce the violation of civil liberties world-wide. The installations inspired a documentary, also entitled Peace Taxi, which was featured in late November at the Regent Park Film Festival as well as the Asian Television Network. The event took months to organize and was exhibited on August 6, 2003 at Downsview subway station.

Altogether, Peace Taxi involved the collaboration of 17 artists from Canada, India, the United Kingdom and the United States to create installations in 14 individual Toronto cabs. These artworks were meant to interact with passengers and to encourage communication between drivers and their clients in a shared space.



Artist Shilpa Gupta's attempts to depict "the ludicrousness of grouping members of the human race into meaningless categories" by inserting a "bottle of simulated blood beside the driver."

The installations also conveyed political and anti-hate messages to the public. For example, one powerful but simple piece named Blame by Shilpa Gupta, commented on the ludicrousness of grouping members of the human race into meaningless categories. This artwork consisted of a bottle of simulated blood beside the driver accompanied by take-away stickers and instructions for passengers to squeeze out the bottled blood and separate it into sections, and then distinguish each division by race and religion.

The decorated cabs elicited mostly positive reactions from drivers and passengers. The drivers were pleased because their preferences were taken into account when the installations were being assembled and as a result, the works gave them a sense of empowerment and overt individuality. Their clientele also responded well, either through stunned silence or voiced enthusiasm for the art.

As SAVAC had hoped, drivers reported that a lot conversation revolving around the pieces was generated between them and the passengers. Some people went as far as to specially request peace taxis when they called Toronto Taxi for a cab.

Unfortunately, although exhaustive effort had been invested in organiz-

ing, producing and documenting Peace Taxi, many of the installations were destroyed within weeks of their mounting due to their unpredicted vulnerability to wear-and-tear as well as vandalism.

Regardless, the project gained enough attention to snatch the interest of New York cab companies who approached SAVAC in hopes of convincing its members to organize an event similar to Peace Taxi in the states. SAVAC declined the offer due to financial and time constraints, as well as the feeling that the amount of time invested in creating Peace Taxi was disproportional to the longevity of the pieces.

Still, the project survives in its documentary film, which project curator Cyrus Irani predicts will be screened in high schools and festivals not as a promotional video, but as a source of information that not only records the making of Peace Taxi, but also the personal stories of foreign cab drivers in Toronto.

Irani also believes that the installations will serve as inspiration for other community-based projects that will voice opinions on controversial issues and serve as gateways to communication among people of multi-ethnic backgrounds.



Bo Wen Chan, 20,  
University of Toronto



## Radio with an Urban Youth Perspective....

Tune in to *Catch da Flava* Youth Radio on CKLN 88.1 FM  
on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month @ 7:20 p.m.

# Marriage and Babies Can Wait

## More Black Women are Choosing Career Life Over Family Life



***"...I can't see myself trapped with a husband and children. The thought of working all day, then coming home to cook and clean after a set of children is not very appealing at all."***

This issue can be looked at in different ways. We see the growing numbers of women who are on the career track first are visible minorities. Why is there such an increase? Is it because they have something to prove? Is it because Caucasian women can afford to put their careers on hold? And why is the thought of the "independent woman" a lifestyle so appealing to today's young woman?

Personally, I can't see myself trapped with a husband and children. The thought of working all day, then coming home to cook and clean after a set of children is not very appealing at all.

According to various scholars, authors and women worldwide, I'm not the only one. The number of financially-secure, physically-fit and emotionally-stable single women is on the rise. They have success in mind first, and maybe, if any man be lucky enough, a husband and children second.

From a sociological perspective, some women have no choice but to pursue their career options. They are fully capable of handling both career and family, but what do you do when there isn't much to choose from in terms of 'husband-material'?

In her book, "Having It All? Black Women and Success," Veronica Chambers discusses the difference between Caucasian and African American women and the choices that they make in life.

The full time mother is not only a housewife. She may pursue a career while looking after her children through a home-based business. Chambers notes that the difference is that Black women have been 'stay at home moms' for generations-only back then, Black women not only took care of their own offspring, but those of her master's. Says Chambers, "Throughout most of the 20th century, black women worked outside the home by necessity. It was an economic imperative; a black family needed two incomes to make ends meet. While college-educated white women felt pressure to remain at home and be the good mother, college-educated black women were pressured to use their degrees to 'uplift the race.'"

***"...In Canada, generalized statistics do not specify the number of visible minority women who are successful yet single."***

There are thousands of Black women making six-figure salaries. The number of Black women with or, obtaining post-secondary degrees is higher than Black men. With the successful leaps that Black women have made, their desire of having a family is pushed to the back of their minds. Why? A) The desire to prove themselves in the corporate world. B) The unequal ration of educated and financially stable Black men to women.

Here in Canada, generalized statistics do not specify the number of visible minority women who are successful yet single. While the percentage of women who decide to have children first is not as high as it was 50 years ago, the number is slowly rising. Statistics Canada reports that the average mother is in the 23-25 age range. That's straight out of university, straight into marriage. Then, just over 20 per cent of Canada's labour force is made up of mothers, so the balance is very possible.

Where's the breathing room?! To break it down, there's not much: the Cana-

dian child starts elementary school at six-years-old, high school at 14 and college/university at 18. That's 17 years of education in total, even more if one goes to medical school or studies law. To go through all of that and then decide to make one of the biggest decisions in life is too much for me.

But those who do it, I commend them. Many women, regardless of race, look upon Phylicia Rashad's Cosby Show character to see how a working mother handled her business. Clair Huxtable was beautiful, intelligent and had the crowing achievement any sister could want-an equally educated, professional man. Plus, she worked while raising five children.

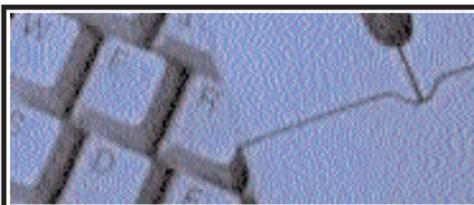
These things run both ways. Women who are 28-years-old and content that their families are complete obviously have things on track-their way. And that's commendable. Holding ground in a relationship and child rearing is not easy.

Similarly, another 28-year-old can find contentment in being vice-president of an established corporation, with her finances secure and a social life that is incomparable. No children? No problem. These women know what they want out of life and will devote their time to their career and self-growth instead of rearing children.

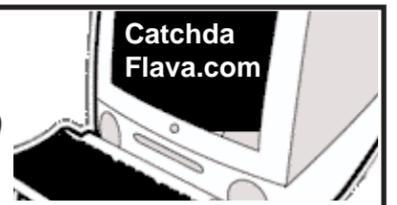
While I admire my cousin with following through on her dream of marrying young and "growing with her children," she can keep that lifestyle. There's no 'marriage time clock'-I'm in no rush. I'll keep the single and successful title for as long as I can. Marriage can wait. I'll take success over cooking dinner and changing diapers-for now, anyway.



da Flava's Kimberley Johnson, 22, Ryerson University



Log on to Catch da Flava @  
[www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)



# Ask da Sexpert!

**Jerking off... whacking off... jacking off... jilling off... petting the kitten...choking the chicken, spanking the monkey...beating the meat...diddling...twerking....**

Whatever you call it, many people do it and, contrary to what some radical religious groups would say, it's natural. Masturbation or self-stimulation is, according to Esther Drill, Heather McDonald and Rebecca Odes, the authors of *Deal with it! A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain and Life as a Gurl*, the "primary sexual activity of the human race, and...more people masturbate than participate in any other kind of sex."

In our society, masturbation is something that is commonly thought of and more accepted as a deed done by men. But, don't be misled. Women masturbate and do it as much as men do. And why not? Masturbation is the best way of figuring out what feels good to you. It helps you get acquainted with and keep in touch (no pun intended) with your body. Knowing how your body responds to sexual stimulation will make it easier for you to communicate what your body likes to your partner and in turn, this can help you be a better lover.

So far, masturbation seems all good and this may contradict with all those masturbation myths that are floating around. Not to worry, none of these myths are true. Nothing will happen to you if you masturbate, that is assuming that you are not spending all your time masturbating and you're not doing it in public spaces. In fact, masturbation can even keep you healthier if it prevents you from having sex with the wrong person and/or sooner than you are ready for it emotionally. And keep in mind that even though many people masturbate, if you chose not to masturbate, that's normal and natural too. Whatever is comfortable and feels good for your body is the best thing for you to do.

For women, there is one slight danger with masturbation and that is infection if you masturbate with something unclean. Also, rubbing too hard or for too long can irritate your sex organs for both men and women. If this happens, stop, and the irritation should go away. If it doesn't go away after a few days and you continue to experience pain or dis-

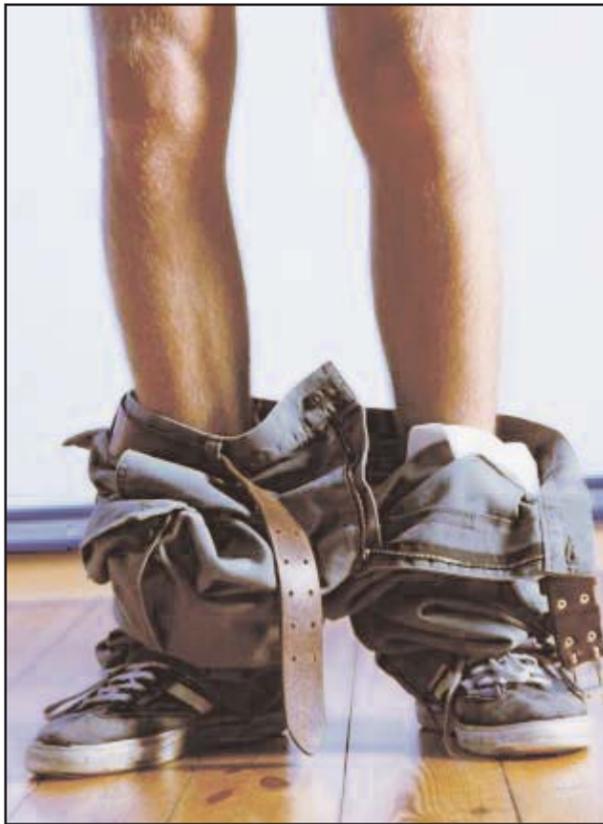
comfort see a doctor because something else may be going on. However, it's very unlikely that masturbation has done any harm.

Otherwise, with masturbation there are no risks and no pressure. You can't

catch any diseases and you can't get pregnant. It's the ultimate safe sex. And since masturbation is done alone, there's no performance anxiety or embarrassment.

Well, there's nothing embarrassing about masturbation that is, if you don't get caught. We've all heard at least one of those awful stories where a friend of a friend of ours either got caught masturbating or found themselves in an awkward situation while pleasuring themselves. Here are some stories that were submitted to Catch da Flava. All of them are examples of how the pleasure one experiences while masturbating can turn into crushing and sickening feeling of embarrassment when caught red-handed.

*I would always secretly masturbate in front of my younger brother's computer. This time was like any other except that when I ejaculated, I made a mess all over the place. I cleaned up the mess and shortly after, my brother kicked me off the computer and I went into my room. Within a minute, my brother came into my room and with a stern and father-*



*ly demeanor said, "If you're going to do that kind of stuff at my computer, make sure you clean up after yourself." I went into his room to see what he was talking about and it so happens that I left some of my mess on the arm rest of his computer chair. I have never felt that level of embarrassment until that day. But thank God it was my brother who saw the mess and not my mother or*

*father.*

**~Sticky Situation, 21, Brampton**

*I had just finished pleasuring myself and before I got up to wash my hands, I put my vibrator on my desk. While I was in the washroom, my roommate came home and asked if she could get the CD she lent to me. I told her it was in my room, on my shelf, (which is right beside my desk). A few seconds later I realized what I had done and screamed for her to wait and to not go into my room. But it was a few seconds too late. My roommate yelled back, "Why? What are you hiding? Is it purple?" She was already in my room and standing right in front of my purple vibrator. My face turned a nice bright red to match the pale brown my roommate's face turned from laughing so hard she could hardly breathe.*

**~Bad Vibes, 21, Toronto**

*My younger brother called me one day while I was busy at work and asked me to use my web cam. Without hesitation, I said yes. Later that day at*

*lunch time, I began to reminisce about the night before and how much fun I had touching myself and capturing it all on my web cam. That's when I almost choked on my lunch. I remembered that once the web cam program is opened, it loads all the pictures you've taken. This means that my brother faced some up-close, personal and - goeey pictures of my private area. I didn't know how I was going to act once I got home and had to look my brother in the face. I decided the best approach was to pretend nothing happened. Thankfully, my brother played along and didn't mention anything about the surprise he got. But sure enough, when I opened the web cam program, there was a picture of my brother holding a sign that was poking fun at the size of my genitals. I was busted.*

**~Bust a Shot, 22, North York**

These stories illustrate some of the worst and most embarrassing things that can happen when it comes to masturbating. Not bad, considering the other gross and more serious things that can happen from having sex with someone else, like catching an STD. So have fun while masturbating, it's enjoyable, pleasurable, celebratory of your body and shouldn't be something to be embarrassed about. Just make sure you cover all your tracks -- and clean up all your mess-- to avoid any of these potentially embarrassing situations.

Do you have any questions or concerns for the Sexpert? Don't be afraid to ask! Search our Web site at: [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com) and contact us. Da Sexpert will be offering advice about relationships and sex in each issue of Catch Da Flava.



da Flava's Sexpert

Listen to **Catch da Flava Radio Live**  
on CKLN 88.1 FM on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:20 pm

# NO!!

A kid misbehaves and the school is quick to send them home, hoping the unruly student will realize what they've done wrong and learn their lesson. The reality of the situation is that removing a student from school and sending them home does not discipline the student nor does it do anything positive or constructive for them. Suspension doesn't help the student understand what they did wrong, it doesn't give them any guidance or the help they need to modify their behaviour and act appropriately. Instead, a suspended student misses valuable class time and enjoys a nice little holiday for the duration of the suspension.

When sent to the comforts of their home, a student quickly forgets what they've done wrong and how can anyone blame them? Any thought of discipline is quickly thrown out the window as their time to "reflect on their bad behaviour" is spent by going to matinee movies, hanging out at the mall, going to the arcade or playing video games at home. This is far from the more beneficial structure and learning atmosphere of the classroom.

Nicholas, a 13-year-old grade 8 student at Jesse Ketchum Public School says that when he gets suspended, he just chills at home.

"When I get suspended, I sleep in and play video games," says Nicholas, "Suspension also makes you fall behind in school work and you miss out on a lot of things that happen."

By the time the student's suspension is over, still no one would have taken the time to talk to the student about their behaviour, this making it all the more likely that they student will repeat the same unacceptable acts. Even more, parents who have to work and leave their children at home alone while they are suspended may not find the time to give their student the discipline or supervision they need.

So, instead of keeping the student at home, students who misbehave should be able to attend school so they can be monitored by teachers. Also, there should be special behaviour sessions the student must attend and opportunities for teachers and guidance counselors to sit down with the student and have discussions about the rules of the school and the consequences if the rules are broken. The session could also include problem-solving strategies and other coping mechanisms that students can use to help them stay out of trouble. Teachers and counselors at schools have a duty to help the offending student identify the root of their behaviour because if that isn't identified, the student's behaviour will only get worse. Sending a troublesome kid home without identifying the issues at hand doesn't solve anything, nor does it discipline the student in any way. If anything, suspension only sets a student back as they have to catch up on missed work and their behaviour doesn't change for the better.



*da Flava's Mey Mey Fung, 16,  
West Toronto Collegiate Institute*

# FACE OFF

## Is Suspension an Effective Disciplinary Measure for Students ?



is a better chance that they will come back to school with a changed attitude.

The purpose of suspension is to discipline the student and to teach them not to break the rules, and suspension does just that. Alternative disciplinary measures, like detention is a waste of time. This is so as a detention is just time spent after school or during recess or lunch breaks for students to do homework and teachers have to waste their time supervising them. Doing homework during a detention doesn't teach the student anything about what they did wrong and as a result, the student doesn't realize that there are serious consequences for their inappropriate behaviour. Suspension, on the other hand, is a heavier punishment because the student falls behind in class work and thus has to catch up on their own time and they can also lose various privileges such as going on class trips and being a part of group presentations. These consequences give a student a lot to think about while their at home. Missing out on these privileges and having the increased work load when the student gets back to school is sometimes enough for a student to learn their lesson and change their behaviour.

It has been suggested that instead of being suspended, students should be put into a behaviour program or in a special session during school hours so teachers and school officials can connect with the student individually to discuss and address their bad behaviour. This isn't the best approach to dealing with the problem because the last thing a student needs is to be hounded and lectured about how bad they are and how wrong their action was. When a student does something wrong or inappropriate, they need time on their own and away from school to think about what they've done and to do what it takes to correct their behaviour.

In the end, suspension is a more effective disciplinary measure than a detention. A suspension teaches a student that when they cause trouble or break a rule they will be disciplined. Sometimes a suspension doesn't change the way a person behaves, but it isn't up to the suspension to change someone, the student has to choose to change their behaviour and they have time to reflect on these matters when they are sent home on a suspension. Whether or not a suspension will change every student's behaviour for the better can't be determined, but what a suspension does is reinforce what's right and what's wrong and that's what matters.



*da Flava's Crystal Fung, 16,  
Jarvis Collegiate*

# YES!!

Ever since the zero tolerance policy was implemented by the Toronto District School Board in 2000, suspending students for inappropriate behaviour has become an even more popular disciplinary measure taken by schools. There are those who believe that suspending students is a waste of time; that it does nothing positive for the student, but I believe that suspension works. Suspension gives the student time to think about what they've done and what they have to do better, all in the comfort of their own home. When the student is at home, they are able to think more clearly and with less stress and this makes it easier for them to realize that they broke the rules. When the student can realize and admit that they broke the rules, there

# Choice Is Yours

## Youth Binge Drinking a Problem: Report

Are you a drinker? If so, what kind of drinker are you? Do you drink at moderate, low risk levels? Or, do you go all out, binge and over indulge? Well, if you answered yes to the latter description, this isn't surprising. A recent report called the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey, published by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, states that binge drinking is a problem among young people.

The CAMH study questioned students in grades 7 through 12 across Ontario. Through the survey it was concluded that 26% of all students engaged in binge drinking.

Experts define binge drinking as consuming 5 or more standard drinks on one occasion (one standard drink being 12 oz. beer, or 5 oz. wine, or 1.5 oz. liquor).

However, young people themselves do not necessarily define binge drinking in this way. Some young people think that bingeing means consuming more than 10 drinks at one time, throwing up and/or passing out.

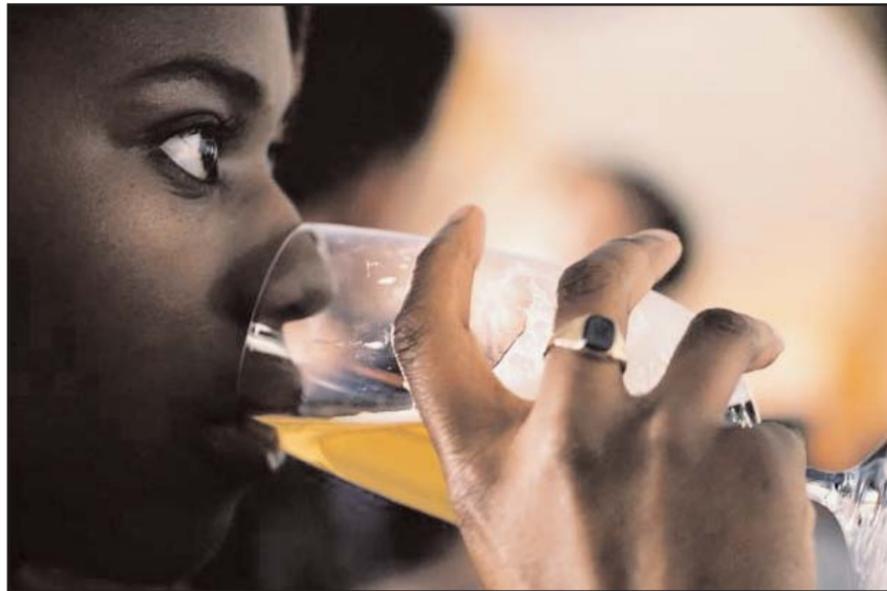
Jake (last name withheld), a 21-year-old from Toronto, admits that he used to "binge drink" all the time just a few years ago. "I'd have a six pack just to chill out," says Jake.

Jake told Catch da Flava that he used to think that 'drinking was just something everyone did and only alcoholics had to think about when or how much to drink (or not drink).'

Jake recalls, "Whenever I'd go to house parties, I'd bring 12 beers just for me. It's what we all did, or so I thought. I

didn't realize it at the time, but the others who would show up with a case of beer - they would share it with other people at the party. But me, I just drank my own - didn't share it with nobody, but didn't ask nobody for theirs either."

Jake didn't think he had a drink-



ing problem because he was not drinking every day. The OSDUS report states that just over 25 per cent of today's young people disapproved of daily drinking.

The low-risk drinking guidelines state that the maximum number of drinks men should have in one day is three, and two for women. The weekly maximum number of drinks for men is 14 and nine for women. Jake stated that sometimes he would have 14 drinks in one night, never mind a week.

Jake says that he used to believe that the more he drank the more respect he would get. "If you could down a bottle of Jacks and still party afterwards, you

were king," says Jake, "and the faster you drank, the more drunk you got, the more people seemed to crowd around you."

Things changed for Jake when someone he knew asked for his help in planning a party.

"This guy I knew from the gym, he was asking me how much beer he should buy for this house party he was having. He guessed there would be about fifty people or so. So I told him, just make sure everyone gets their own six pack and everything should be fine, but get extra just in case. The reaction I got ... his eyes bugged out of his head, 'What?!' he says to me. I felt so awkward. I had no idea that people didn't drink like I did."

After this embarrassing moment, Jake challenged himself to go to a party and not drink. Jake says that attending a party and staying sober for the first time was a

life-changing experience.

"It was crazy, all these people that I thought I knew just got so weird and stupid as the night went on. The worst part was that I noticed that peoples' faces do change once they've drank a fair bit. I always thought that was just something that was made up for T.V., for those Just-Say-No after school specials."

Jake says he is now careful about how much he drinks.

"It's a challenge sometimes, especially when you're with people who drink a lot, but I just feel this is better for me. At least I know that if I only have two or three drinks I'll be alright. Before, when I just drank and drank and drank, I'd get into fights, get thrown out of clubs. Instead of destroying myself and everyone and everything around me, now I enjoy myself when I'm out drinking."

When asked if he had any advice for young drinkers, Jake said, "Don't be afraid or ashamed to say you've had enough. It's much more embarrassing to go to work or school the next day and have everyone else but yourself know what you did the night before."



da Flava's Sarah Ayers, 24

## Having a Party? Know What You're in For!

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has 10 tips so that you won't be left with more than just a mess the next morning!

As the host you can be held responsible for:

- injuries or damages that occur as a result of the alcohol you provide;
- what happens to guests when they are in your home or on your property;
- the safety and behaviour of your guests until they're sober, not just until they leave your party or function.

More and more, courts are placing legal responsibility on people who serve alcohol or host events where guests are drinking.

If you plan ahead, you can lower both your risk and your guests' risks of having problems.

Why take chances? Follow the tips below to reduce your risk and make your party even better!

CAMH's 10 Tips to Help Reduce Your Risk:

1. Don't drink too much yourself! You can stay on top of potential problems better when you can think clearly and act quickly.
2. Plan ahead.
3. Stop serving alcohol a few hours before the party is over. Bring out more alcohol-free drinks and food.
4. Find out how guests will be going

home from your party. Be prepared to take away car keys. Know your designated drivers. Have cash and phone numbers ready for taxis.

5. Plan to deal with guests who drink too much. Ask someone to be prepared to help you before the party gets rolling.

6. Serve drinks yourself instead of having an open bar. Avoid doubles. Guests usually drink more when they serve themselves.

7. Be prepared for overnight guests. Get those blankets and sleeping bags ready.

8. Serve snacks! It is better to eat while drinking than to drink on an empty stomach. Try veggies, cheeses and light dips -- they're great and don't make your guests thirsty, as salty, sweet or greasy foods do.

9. Have low-alcohol and alcohol-free cocktails and drinks available too. How about a non-alcoholic punch?

10. Don't plan physical activities, like swimming, skiing, snowmobiling and skating when you serve alcohol. People are more prone to accidents when they've been drinking.

For more information about alcohol and other drugs call CAMH's R. Samuel McLaughlin Addiction and Mental Health Information Centre at 1-800-463-6273. In Toronto, call 416-595-6111 or visit our new location in Toronto at 219 Dufferin Street.

# Youth In Action

## POR AMOR: Opening up Opportunities in Puerto Plata



Ask the average young Canadian adult what he or she plans to do after university, and they will probably mention something about earning money, starting a family, or furthering their education. Not so for Tamika and Melissa of POR AMOR. This group was formed half a year ago by four recent female university graduates who are planning to volunteer for five months teaching English, providing health care, and giving lessons on agricultural skills to students living in the barrios of Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic.

Melissa and Tamika, who have studied environmental science, will be

leaving in May 2004 to facilitate the latter part of this project by showing young people how to grow organic gardens. The other two women, a nurse and an English teacher, will depart on February 7th, 2004 to educate students on topics such as sex ed and poetry. This venture was created in partnership with Integracion Juvenil, a non-profit humanitarian organization slash school dedicated to solving the street youth problem in Puerto Plata. Since 1978, Integracion Juvenil has been providing care, education and meals to impoverished children and teens living in its community in hopes of helping them become self-sufficient in society. Today, the school serves about 125 youths and is supported by a small number of donors.

In order to amass the \$10,000 needed for this project POR AMOR has done extensive fundraising, such as holding a two-part benefit concert series in January at El Mocambo and the Silver Dollar. In addition to money, the organization also seeks beneficial services and raffle prize donations. POR AMOR asks interested donors and people with feedback or questions to email [por\\_amor411@hotmail.com](mailto:por_amor411@hotmail.com).

*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 20  
University of Toronto*



### CALLING All YOUTH IN ACTION!

Know of youth who are movers and shakers, making things happen and doing work in the community. Contact us and have them featured in the next issue of Catch da Flava.

Catch da Flava  
Regent Park Focus  
600 Dundas East (Rear Basm't),  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5A 2B9

[www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)

# YOU can make a difference!

# Be a Mentor!

## Make a difference in the lives of many children...

Get involved with the  
**One on One Community Mentoring Program**  
at the Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club

Mentor a child between 10 and 14 years  
We meet on Tuesdays from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

To get involved or more information  
contact Jeannine or Edward at  
(416) 925-2243 Extension 34  
E-mail: [mentorship\\_program@hotmail.com](mailto:mentorship_program@hotmail.com)



## QUICK FACTS:

Under the Safe Schools Act of Ontario, a student will be immediately suspended for any of the following reasons:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm;
- acts of vandalism causing extensive damage to school property or property located on school premises;
- swearing at a teacher, or other person in authority;
- being in possession of alcohol and/or drugs;
- engaging in another activity that, under a policy of the board, is one for which a suspension is mandatory.

Suspensions may range from 1 to 20 days. The Principal will consider the student's history, the offense and other factors deemed appropriate when determining the length of suspension.

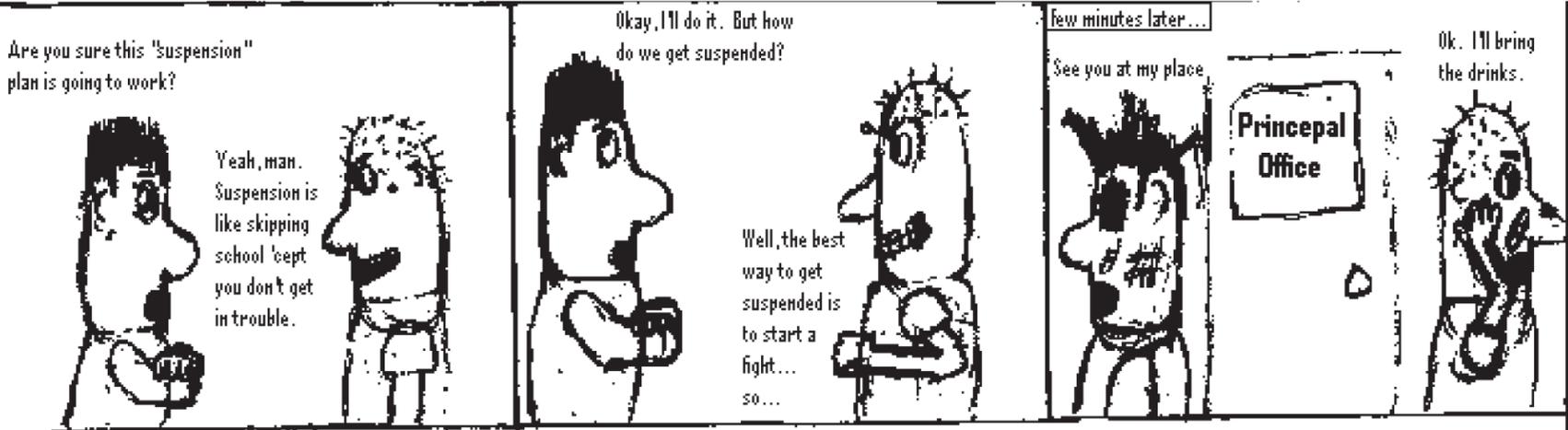
...continued from page 2

From out of nowhere, the teen's father came storming towards us, screaming and yelling belligerently. When the father finally broke us up, he asked his son why we were fighting. Do you think that the teen told the truth? Did the teen tell his father that he started the fight and asked me for my money. Of course not! Instead, the teen told his father that I hit him first and that I was going to rob him. When I attempted to tell my side of the story, the father got really rude with me and said "Shut up! You people always cause trouble! You always start things! Now go home!" And with that, I left what was my first fight in this country; a fight that in my

mind symbolizes my journey as a newcomer to Canada.

However difficult the journey may take and even though it may take some time before I feel like Canada is home, I choose to be here. In China, I was poor and that means that my chances of getting a good education were against me. I am not that much richer here in Canada, but now I can go to school, graduate from post-secondary studies and get a good job. The beginning of my journey in Canada may have been rough but it has just begun and I look forward to the day when I feel totally comfortable here and I can truly say that Canada is my home.

da Flava's Tony Li, 14,  
Monarch Park Collegiate



By:  
Heraldo  
Garcia



Toronto Community Housing



## Regent Park Revitalization

Over the next 12-15 years, Regent Park will undergo an unprecedented transformation...

The Regent Park Revitalization Web site has a brand new look!

Toronto Community Housing is excited that so many people have expressed an interest in our redevelopment plans - the first step in creating a revitalized and healthy community. Now you can get the latest information about what's happening in Regent Park.

Visit us at [www.regentpark.ca](http://www.regentpark.ca)

Thank you to the residents, staff, friends and neighbours of Regent Park for your continued support of the revitalization project.

# REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

## Communities Come Together at the First Annual Regent Park Film Festival



Regent Park Focus Super 8 Film makers talk about their films. Festival director Chandra Siddan Peace Taxi members

On the evening of Thursday November 20, 2003, over 100 eager students, parents and other community members filed into Nelson Mandela Park School to attend the first annual Regent Park Film Festival. The turnout was impressive, considering the very limited funding and advertising that was available to the organizers of this event. Over the three-day festival, an estimated 400 to 500 people from all across the Greater Toronto Area attended the screening of nearly 40 videos, including local content provided by the Regent Park Focus Media Arts program which was presented on the opening night.

Additionally, on Saturday morning, two film workshops for students were held: the first one was sponsored by the

National Film Board of Canada and taught animation to elementary school children, and the second was a super-8 film production workshop facilitated by youth staff members from Regent Park Focus.

The theme of this year's festival was South Asian culture in North American society and abroad. Issues such as racism, sexuality, and ethnic identity were explored through various genres including documentaries and short films. A number of the filmmakers were present to discuss their works and address questions from the audience.

Festival director Chandra Siddan stressed that this festival would have been impossible without the co-operation

and shared visions of artists, community members and organizations. The main goal of the festival was to promote inter- and intra-communal communication, as well as cross-cultural understanding.

Directors, producers, organizers, the media, teachers, parents and students all played an integral role in the festival's success, as well as in promoting its messages of tolerance and education about South Asian culture.

Further information on the festival can be found at: [www.regentparkfilmfestival.com](http://www.regentparkfilmfestival.com).

*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 20,  
University of Toronto*

## Lieutenant Governor Honours Regent Park Students



Congratulations to the two grade 11 students from the Pathways to Education Program who received certificates from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, James Bartleman on Dec. 2, 2003. Joey and Chandralega are Regent Park youth who presented speeches on the topic of "heroes in their lives" at a

special reception held at Queen's Park to honour the Pathways to Education Program. Also present was our MPP, who is also the new Minister of Health and Long Term Care, George Smitherman. Smitherman delivered his own moving speech on heroes.

## WOMP Word of Mouth Project



On Dec. , 2003 about 25 community members attended a surprise farewell party for Constable Mike McCormack of 52 Division. McCormack has played a leading role in community efforts to strengthen relationships between youth and police. Constable Mike spent time meeting with youth and local groups. He also helped to initiate a police and youth basketball league at the Regent Park Community Center. Farewell Mike!

Looking to pick up a hot new cd. Well don't look for it at HMV or Sam the Record Man. I'm talking about Womp, a hot new 12-track cd produced by youth right here in the Regent Park community. Womp stands for the Word of Mouth Project. The project was a collaboration between St. Christopher Youth Employment Center, Dixon hall and the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation. The Womp cd release party was held at the Regent Park Community Centre on December 15th. According to coordinator, Kelvin Jeffers, the project engaged youth in lifeskills, employment training and music production. Participants teamed up with music professionals at Studio 120 to record their tracks. "It takes a lot of work to write and record a cd" says Dwayne Syvbliss, a 20-year-old participant. "I now have tremendous respect for artists." says Dwayne. Donna lee Grant, another 20-year-old participant agrees. "We learned a lot" says Donna lee.

If you're interested in finding out how you can obtain a copy of WOMP contact Kevin Jeffers at Dixon Hall at 416-863-0499.

### Regent Park Focus Happenings

#### Snap Shots Photography Program

Youths 14 to 19 years old. Join us to learn how to develop your own photos. Every Monday 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Stay tuned for our On-line Photography Workshops.

Listen to Catch da Flava Youth Radio on CKLN 88.1 FM on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month @ 7:20 pm or participate in our live shows by coming down or online via our Live EYE.

- Feb. 17, 2004  
TBA

- Feb. 24th, 2004 (8 - 9pm)  
Black History Month Programing  
- March 2nd, 2004  
Youth Employment

Check out [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com) for more information

#### Guerrilla Computing

- Learn how to put together computer parts to build a working system.

- Learn how to install open source software

Every Thursday starting April 1st  
Call to register.

#### FEELING STRESSED?

Try a gentle hatha yoga class  
Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:30  
Please arrive in the first 10 minutes  
Beginners welcome any week.  
Interested kids can join, too!  
New Year's Classes Start January 7  
Yoga is great way to relax your  
mind and body

The Yoga Den at Focus - 600 Dundas St. East  
For more information, call Cheryl at 363-3920

Our yoga is always free

Regent Park Focus Centre is located at 600 Dundas St. East rear basement.

Phone: (416) 863-1074  
Fax: (416) 863-9440