



REGENT PARK FOCUS
YOUTH MEDIA
ARTS CENTRE

WINTER 2009

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

A photograph showing a man in a dark shirt looking at a computer monitor on a small table. The room has graffiti on the walls, including a large 'FOCUS' sign and a map-like drawing. Another person is partially visible in the background.

The Directors Group

The Directors Group is a collective of aspiring filmmakers who meet weekly to learn about the art of film making. One of the ways they do this is by seeing and critiquing films. On February 6th, 13 members of the Directors Group attended a screening of *Nurse, Fighter Boy*, a movie by African-Canadian film maker Charles Officer. The group enjoyed seeing the film and hopes to host a visit with Charles sometime in the near future.

Seeing and talking about films is one thing but making your own movie is another altogether. During the winter season the Directors Group began producing two comedic short videos. *Stall* is a hilarious short about a man who gets locked in a bathroom, while *Demon Buddy* is about a young man who finds out the hard way what happens to over-talkative people who overstep the boundaries of personal space.

In addition to these shorts, the Directors Group took on the production of three informational

videos designed to assist newcomers to Canada. The topics of the videos were How to Use the TTC, How to Get Your Drivers License and How to Open a Bank Account. The videos, which are available in French and English, were sponsored by the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and will be available shortly for viewing at www.regentpark.tv



Interested in the art of film making? Join the Directors Group on Wednesday evenings from 6pm to 8:30 pm.

Catch Da Flava Radio & Magazine Collective

The Catch da Flava Youth Collective is a group of 16 high school aged youth who use media to explore issues affecting their community. As part of the Collective's regular activities they host a weekly radio

show on CKLN 88.1 FM and produce a quarterly magazine. The winter 2009 season was a busy one for the Collective.



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To begin with, Regent Park Focus released the Alwy Al Nadhir Memorial Gone but Not Forgotten issue of Catch da Flava. Alwy was an 18 year old student who was killed in a confrontation with police in Riverdale Park on Halloween night 2007. Many people feel that the shooting was unjustified despite a subsequent SIU investigation that cleared the officer in question. The memorial issue of Catch da Flava served as a

forum for the community to remember Alwy and to express their anger towards what many perceive as discriminatory

and racist police practices. The Alwy issue is available for viewing on the Regent Park Focus website. Having completed the Alwy issue, the Collective is currently hard at work on the production of the next issue of the magazine which will have a theme of Food Security. As part of this process, the Collective has been participating in bi-weekly photography and Photoshop workshops with Ashley Hutchinson, a free-lance photographer. The magazine is expected to be out in September 2009.

In mid-February, the Catch da Flava Collective teamed up with 8 student volunteers from the Ryerson Transitional Mentorship Program for a ten week radio project. Over the course of the project the group co-produced a series of live broadcast radio shows on themes related to anti-oppression and social justice. The live broadcasts took place every Tuesday from 7:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Some of the segments produced include; a show about Lookism, a form of discrimination based on appearance; Barriers that Youth Face; the Human Trafficking of Filipino Nannies; and Afrocentric schooling. In addition to these shows, the Collective and Ryerson students organized themselves into small groups to produce 4 radio public service announcements (PSAs) on the theme of health. The PSAs and radio shows have been archived and are available for listening on the Regent Park Focus website. The Ryerson partnership culminated with a showcase of some of these audio pieces on March 17th as part of an orientation for 150 high school students held at Ryerson University.



Last Fridays

Last Fridays is an evening performance event held on, you guessed it, the last Friday of each month. Last Fridays continues to be a popular event in the community. On Friday January 30th, 2009 sixty people braved the cold and came out to Regent Park Focus to enjoy the rhythms and stories of First Nation singer/song writer Marc Nadijan. Later in the evening the audience was entertained by The Youngstas, comprised of lead singer Tajah, Trevonne on the keyboards, Anderson and Oshane on drums, Iain on lead guitar and August on bass guitar. As the Regent Park Focus House Band, the Youngstas perform regularly at all Last Friday events. The Youngstas meet weekly on Saturday afternoons to rehearse under the watchful eye of the Focus band instructor, Roy Morency.



Black History Month

February's Black History Month is an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of people of African descent. On February 23rd, as part of a Black History Month celebration event, the Youngstas performed to 300 students and family members at Rose Avenue

School. Regent Park Focus also presented a RPTV video on the importance of Black History Month that was produced in 2007.

On Friday February 27th, Regent Park Focus dedicated the Last Fridays event to Black History Month. The event, held at the Daniel's Presentation Centre, featured African drumming by Kwanza, an African Fashion Show, the soulful singing of Ania Soul, legendary blues singer John T Davis, poetry from Stolen from Africa, and of course, The Youngstas. 80 people were in attendance.

On March 7th, 2009 Regent Park Focus joined Toronto Community Housing in Celebrating Our Community Heroes. The event honoured Toronto Community Housing residents of African descent who have made positive contributions to the Regent Park community. In addition to a panel discussion with the recipients, the event featured a performance by The Youngstas. Members of Regent Park TV were on hand to videotape the proceedings and the event can be viewed at www.regentpark.tv

Strip Mining for Creative Cities

From January 15th to March 1st, 2009 the Myths of Regent Park, a work exploring mixed income housing and the redevelopment of Regent Park, was exhibited as a video installation at the Toronto Free Gallery. In the video, which was produced by Regent Park Focus in 2001, the youth filmmakers take the bold position that Forest Hill is a ghetto - and, conversely, Regent Park a desirable neighbourhood. The installation was part of Strip Mining for Creative Cities, an exhibit that examined the tendency of gentrification to strip a thriving neighbourhood of its existing community infrastructure and replace it with consumer architecture. The Myths of Regent Park was favourably reviewed in the January 29-February 5 issue of NOW Magazine.

Flemingdon / O'Connor Media Project

The Flemingdon / O'Connor Media Project is a programme funded by the Youth Challenge Fund. The aim of the project is to establish a satellite media lab in the O'Connor area that can support the development of Be Scene Magazine, a print publication modelled after our very own Catch da Flava magazine. Be Scene provides a forum for youth to creatively express themselves, learn media literacy skills, and become critically engaged in community life. In addition, the media lab will give youth in the O'Connor area opportunities to create various media production pieces that address issues of concern to them. Currently the media lab is located in the public housing complex at 5 Wakunda Place and is run in partnership with O'Connor YMCA.

It was a productive winter season at Be Scene Magazine. As a youth-governed publication, the Be Scene editorial committee met weekly to make all the decisions relating to the magazine. To date, Be Scene has released three issues with articles, poems, photographs, artwork, and designs

submitted by youth from the neighbourhoods of O'Connor-Parkview, Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park. The Be Scene issues were distributed in over 50 locations.

From December to March, Flemingdon / O'Connor Media Project staff members Steve Blair, Neguss Demoz-Goshe and Omar Wright (a youth graduate of the project) met three times a week with 12 unemployed, out-of-school youth to teach them interview and video production skills. Following this the youth were sent out in the city to develop two videos on careers that they were interested in. Working in partnership with George Brown College's Culinary Program, one production team produced an eight minute video on becoming a Chef. The other team interviewed paralegals working in the law profession. Congratulations are due to Shanice Douglas, Ashley Gillion, Kery Munro, Maya Walters, Tristan Smith, Derek Persaud, Joshua Guerin, Kristina Caine, Shakira Samuels and Lincoln Collins for their great videos.

**Want to preview our work, get in touch or drop by?
You can find us at:**

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