

# < CATCH DA FLAVA >

November/December 2005

www.catchdaflava.com

Volume 11 Issue 3

Youth and Community Newspaper Produced by the Regent Park Focus

## The Decline of Arts Education

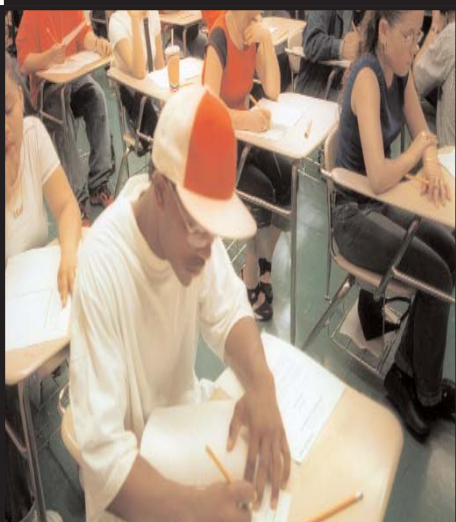


I koro Huggins-Warner is a 13-year-old student attending grade 8 at a local junior high school. He wants to pursue performance arts in high school. The only problem is that there are only eight secondary schools in the entire Toronto District School Board that offer performance arts curriculum, and only three of these are located in the district he lives in. Ikoro has applied to these schools but they all have limited enrolment policies, which means there is a strong possibility that he may not get in. Ikoro is not alone. According to a report (Arts in Ontario Public Schools) released in May 2004 by the parent advocacy group People for Education, over the last few years there has been a significant decline in the number of arts courses and programs available to Ontario students.

In 1998 the former provincial conservative government under Premier Mike Harris made substantial changes to education and the way they fund schools. As a result of the changes, many schools felt that they had no choice but to cut or reduce music, art and drama from their curricular offerings. The Arts in Ontario Public Schools report noted that the number of elementary schools with music teachers has declined 32% since 1997/98, and that 60% of music teachers reported inadequate funds for their elementary music programs. The report also found a 25% decline in the number of visual arts teachers in junior high schools since 1998/99. This lack of specific funding for specialized arts teachers means that boards have to take money from classroom teachers' preparation time to pay them.

Speaking at the September 29th Arts on the Radar conference (sponsored by the Arts Network for Children and Youth), Annie Kidder from People for Education stated that she believes this decline in arts education was allowed to happen because the arts community had failed to educate people about the critical role, value and importance of the arts.

Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.--Albert Einstein



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## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

Catch da Flava is a youth and community newspaper that is published bi-monthly. The newspaper is distributed FREE to households, 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.

Catch da Flava welcomes letters and submissions from young people (up to age 24). Submissions should be no more than 1500 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 catchmail@catchdaflava.com

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# Editorial

## Federal Election 2006: Time For Change

This holiday season, you can expect more than just carollers knocking at your door. It's likely that at some point during your winter vacation, a local Member of Parliament (MP) is going to come and ring your doorbell to ask for your support in the upcoming election. Even if you're not old enough to vote--but especially if you are--you should consider listening to what your MP has to say.

As we all remember, in November 2005, the Canadian Federal Government was officially overthrown. This move was initiated by Stephen Harper, head of the Conservative Party, which was the Official Opposition because it held the second most number of seats in Parliament. Harper banded with Gilles Duceppe of the Bloc Quebecois and Jack Layton of the New Democratic Party (NDP) to dissolve the Canadian government through a vote of non-confidence on November 29, 2005. This meant that that night, every Member of Parliament had the opportunity to vote either against or in favour of keeping the Liberal government, and because the majority voted against this motion, a new election was called.

Whether or not you or your parents vote, and who you vote for, can ultimately determine things like how much you pay in taxes, whether you will be able to get childcare or disability benefits, what kind of consequences there will be for internet crimes such as downloading or spam, how long you will have to wait for hospital care, and how much you will pay for tuition. On a larger scale, the Federal Government makes decisions on issues such as: whether Canada goes to war; how much money goes to research on the bird flu; how much Canada contributes to the greenhouse problem; where our precious resources including oil, fresh water and diamonds are sold; which industries thrive and which ones have to cut jobs; and much much more.

Because the Federal Government has so much control over where our country's monetary and natural resources are allocated, it makes sense to stay informed, and more importantly, proactive during this election.

What a lot of people take for granted is the fact that we are lucky to live in a democratic country where every citizen 18 and over is given a chance to decide what happens at Queen's Park and Parliament Hill. A lot of younger people,

including myself, often overlook this privilege. We don't make the effort to find out what's happening to our money, health and the environment by staying informed about politics. We don't vote. And if for whatever reason we can't vote, we don't convince the people we know who *can* vote (but don't) to do so. We forget that fact that voting is not a universal right, and if we don't take advantage of this privilege, we could one day lose it. Most importantly, we don't believe that our one vote will make a difference. But just because a lot of people think this way, it doesn't make them right.

The voter turnout for the 2004 Federal Election was only about 65%, and the youth turnout (i.e. voters between 18-24 years old) was only around 30%. This means that the Federal Government is not reflecting the wishes and concerns of millions of Canadians, including the majority of young people. This is not their fault, but ours. Thinking that your one vote doesn't make a difference is not a good enough excuse for your inaction; it robs you of the ownership you have of important decisions made in this country.

If we don't vote, we don't have the right to complain about policies we don't like. This alone should be incentive to keep tabs on the election buzz on television and make that short trip to the nearest polling station on January 23. Big changes start small; once a few more of us start voting, politicians will realise that they have to sincerely address our concerns, rather than merely take advantage of the issues facing young and socio-economically disadvantaged citizens during their campaigns to gain the support of other Canadians who regularly vote. Changing the course of this country is worth 20 minutes of your time. Please remember to vote on January 23, 2006.

For more information on the parties, leaders and major issues during this election, visit <http://www.nodice.ca/elections/canada/index.php>. If you would like to know more about how to vote for the upcoming Federal Election, visit <http://www.elections.ca/>.

by da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 22  
University of Toronto



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THE REGENT PARK FOCUS MEDIA ARTS CENTRE IS COMMITTED TO THE USE OF COMMUNITY-BASED MEDIA TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND ENGAGE YOUTH.

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CATCH DA FLAVA IS SPONSORED BY: THE TIPPET FOUNDATION, THE LAIDLAW FOUNDATION, THE SEARS FOUNDATION AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE.



# What's Your Beef?



Don't Just Sit There, Write About It!  
Visit [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com) and submit to  
[catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com)

## Should There Be A Curfew For Teens Under 16?

As a way of fighting the recent rise in gun violence, a number of city councillors have suggested that there should be a 10pm curfew for youth 16 and under. Da Flava's Christian Muabi asked members of the public how they felt about the issue, and this is what they had to say.



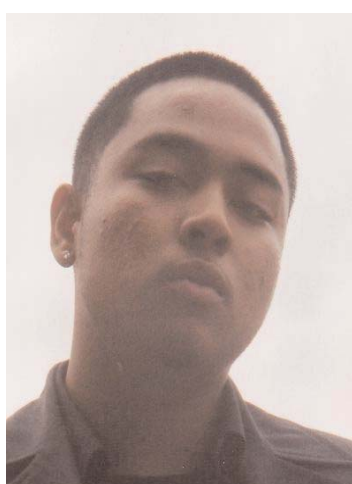
**ICHA**

"I think that is a nice idea because the youth 16 and sometime under make a lot of trouble in Toronto so I think there should a curfew for them."



**MARLON**

"It's good to have the curfew because it will help kids stay out of trouble."



**GENERE**

"I heard about that. I'm thinking back to when I was 16 I did a lot of trouble back then so kids that are 16 and under are pretty young so we should be keeping them out of trouble."



**JC**

"I think it is not fair for a lot of kids under 16 to be punished because of other kids that are doing stupid things. We need to worry about kids that are over 16 because they are the one causing the trouble and they have nothing to lose."



**BRIDGET**

"I don't think that it is a good law as long as you know where your kids are and you can talk to them. I think that that law is overrated."

THE MAYOR OF TORONTO HAS DECIDED TO ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF THE CITY THAT ARE EXPERIENCING GUN VIOLENCE :



IAIN KEW LEE

## ARE YOU AN ARTIST?



### GET PUBLISHED!

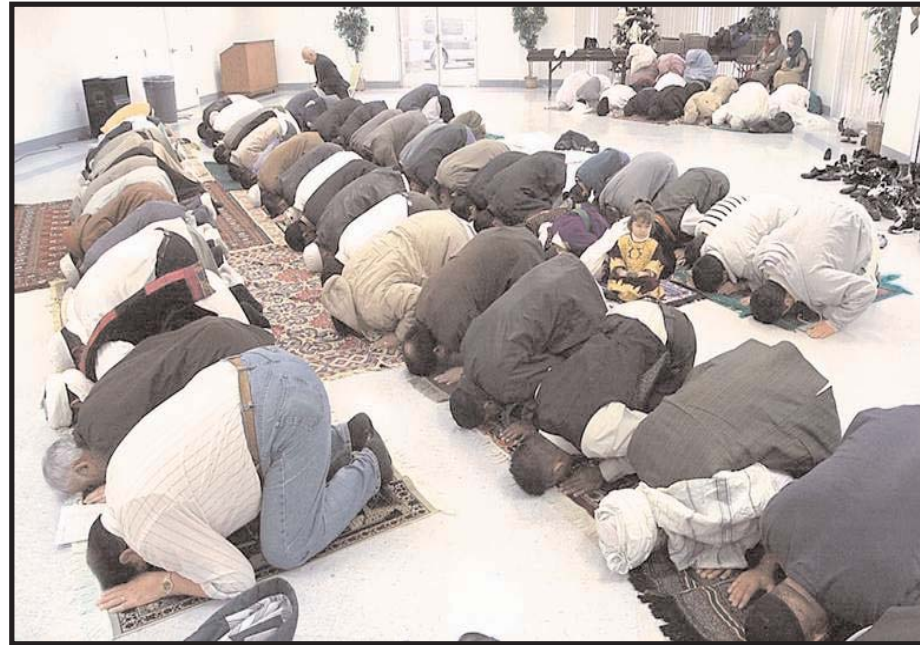
Submit your bio and work in .JPEG or .BMP format to [catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com) if you want to become a Featured Artist in Catch da Flava

# Ramadan and Id al-Fitr Revealed

**W**hy do you always see a Muslim person fasting every ninth month of the year? It is because they follow a fast during the month of Ramadan. The description of Ramadan means the ninth month of the Muslim year, during which all Muslims must restrict their diets during the daylight hours when nothing can be consumed. After the daylight, when the sun is setting, Muslims start to break up their meal known as "iftar." Iftar usually begins with dates and sweet drinks that provide a quick energy boost for the other upcoming meals.

I have been fasting since I was basically old enough to hold a fast, which was around 12 years of age, and I still fast to this day. Fasting serves many purposes. While they are hungry and thirsty, Muslims are reminded of the suffering of the poor around the world. Fasting is also an opportunity to practice self-control and to cleanse the body and mind. And during this most sacred month, fasting helps Muslims feel the peace that comes from spiritual devotion as well as kinship with fellow believers. It is believed that the "shaii-tan," known as the Devil, is locked in a cave which will prevent his intentions from pouring in a Muslim's mind. But if a Muslim intentionally

commits an act that is unacceptable by Allah then he or she has sinned, but Allah is merciful and a devout follower can redeem themselves in many ways. For example if a Muslim



misses one day of fasting, they have to make up for it by fasting up to 30 days or by donating in any way possible to the poor. During the month of Ramadan, you may see Muslims in the Regent Park neighbourhood sharing their iftar meals with other Muslims as a good deed around the time when the sun is setting.

The day after the month of Ramadan is the celebration known as Id al-Fitr, the celebration of breaking the fast. Id al-Fitr is one of the two important

best religious clothing and visiting mosques with their children. They may greet their Muslim neighbours by saying "Id Mubarak," which means "Id blessings." Muslims have to attend a special Id al-Fitr prayer that is performed during congregation at mosques. After the prayer, it is then customary to embrace the persons sitting on either side of you as well as your relatives, friends and acquaintances. People who follow the Muslim calendar of Saudi Arabia celebrate Id al-Fitr a day before other countries and begin Ramadan a day earlier. I hope I have given enough information about Ramadan and Id al-Fitr for you to understand why Muslims fast and celebrate Id.



by da Flava's Faisal Mohammed, 20

## POET'S CORNER

somebody left the rain for me  
I heard a noise at the door  
though nothing on the porch but the  
rain  
no care basket or Girl Scout cookies  
not a bar of soap or a Bible  
not even a dangling participle  
just the rain  
the pitter patter rolling of the drops  
against the window  
where's Bach when you need him  
some one to record the uneven

droll of the drops  
to play back on the morning radio  
or Monet-  
I'm sure he would have thought this  
quite miserable  
how would an impressionist artist  
portray the rain anyway?  
much like a photograph I guess

*By Peter Marshall*

# Shame On You

## The Canadian Government's Inaction in the Chinese Head Tax Redress



A Head Tax Certificate that was meant to discourage Chinese immigrants from entering Canada.

### George Smitherman, MPP



Toronto Centre-Rosedale



*Wishing you and your loved ones peace, health and happiness during this festive season.*

For information and assistance with Ontario Government programs, please contact my Community Action Centre at:

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Toronto M5A 4K2  
Phone: 416 972 7683  
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Web: [www.georgesmitterman.com](http://www.georgesmitterman.com)

Chinese Canadians have been fighting for their rights for decades. From 1885 to 1923, the Canadian government charged Chinese immigrants between \$50 and \$500 to enter this country. The Canadian government made millions of dollars in profit from this Head Tax and has never paid a cent back to the Chinese immigrants.

The Head Tax started when the Canadian Government recruited Chinese men to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway, which spanned the country from east to west and convinced British Columbia to join Canada instead of the United States. The Chinese workers were given the most dangerous tasks on the railroad and many of them died on the job. One of the offers for Chinese workers was that they could bring their family over to Canada, which was one of the main reasons many Chinese people decided to work on the railway in the first place. However, their bosses failed to mention the one catch, which was every family member would have to pay an exorbitant head tax to enter the country. The Head Taxes was not imposed on any other immigrants except for those of Chinese descent.

After so many decades have passed, you would assume that the Chinese would have received an apology and some form of compensation for the suffering and pain they experienced during those years. Unfortunately, nothing has happened. Since 1984, the Chinese Canadian National Council has been trying to seek redress on behalf of the surviving Head Tax payers and their families who have endured hardship from decades of discrimination as a result of these racist laws passed by the Canadian Federal Government. There are still over 4000 Head Tax payers remaining and they have allowed the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) to represent them to seek an apology and financial redress from the government (a redress means "to make amends").

This is very important because it will narrow a rift between Chinese Canadians and other citizens that has divided the country for over a century. The Chinese community feels that a redress will help to redefine the community as one that is rooted in 150 years of contribution to this nation. The Chinese in Canada have been

dedicating their efforts to this nation since the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the innovative businesses that help drive our modern day economy. The CCNC is only asking for a small portion of the revenue that were collected from the Head Tax to be repaid. However, there is a debate within the CCNC about whether individuals who were directly affected by the Head Tax should be compensated, or if the money should be invested in the Chinese community instead, for example in the form of scholarships.

This redress is not only about money and honour, but time is becoming a crucial factor as well. The original Head Tax payers are entering their final stage in life, and they deserve to hear an apology or receive long-overdue compensation for their hardships. Not long ago, a surviving tax payer and his family decided to take this issue to court to get a redress, but their case was dismissed. They appealed to a higher court, but were turned away. Unfortunately, the survivor passed away two years ago and never had the chance to receive the apology he had sought for so long. This is what is going to happen to the rest of the Head Tax survivors.

The government's failure to take responsibility for their past mistakes is nothing but an act of disrespect. The Head Tax survivors are not going to live forever, and the government needs to act before there is nobody left to hear their apology.

For more information on the CCNC's Redress campaign, visit [www.ccnc.ca/redress/redress.html](http://www.ccnc.ca/redress/redress.html). You can become a Canadian for Redress by signing up at [www.ccnc.ca/redress/redress2.html](http://www.ccnc.ca/redress/redress2.html). Notable figures including Margaret Atwood and Jack Layton are already on the list.



by da Flava's Crystal Fung, 17, Central Technical School

# Youth Need Art

...Continued from cover

She noted, "Society thinks of the arts as a non-essential frill and when the arts are under attack, one of the things that happens among those who support the arts is that we get defensive."

When the government brought in the above-mentioned changes they talked about Canadian students' test scores in math, reading and writing compared to students in other countries. They determined that Canada was falling behind and needed to go back to the basics. Notably, the arts were not considered one of these basics. It is in this context that Annie believes the arts community failed to stand up for the arts and pass on the message of how "The arts enrich our lives. Experiencing the arts through music, poetry, paintings, books or plays opens our imaginations and enhances our sense of community." Instead, arts advocates bought into the government's language about back to basics and responded by trying to focus on providing quantifiable measures of the worth of arts. The arts community got trapped into trying to prove that the arts would make everybody money (via tourism), and that the arts could make you smarter and perform better in math and reading.

According to Annie, the problem with this is that the arts are less measurable than the things we like to measure. How do we measure creativity and imagination and its impact on a student and a society as a whole?

Most people know Albert Einstein as

that guy who developed the theory of relativity, or by the formula  $E = MC^2$ . Einstein is most closely linked to mathematics and physics rather than any right-side-of-the-brain subjects, such as fine arts. However Annie reminds us that even Albert Einstein

access to the arts. People for Education are worried that Ontario is moving towards an education system where only students that attend schools located in higher-income communities are exposed to arts. According to Annie, parents fundraise for arts-relat-

can afford to provide private after-school music lessons to their children. Thus the arts enrichment that parents provide is mostly limited to students in affluent areas.

The decline of arts education is not limited to elementary schools. Reforms to secondary schools have also had a negative effect on arts programs. The compression of the secondary school curriculum from five years to four has meant that students who would formerly have graduated with 36 or 37 credits are now graduating with 30. This reduces or eliminates many of the arts elective courses students would have previously chosen. Even when schools offer arts programs, most students feel that they don't have time to take arts classes because their schedules are so crammed with the courses they need to take to get into college or university. With small enrollments, arts courses often begin to get dropped. "Because the focus in high school has become about what you need to take to go to university, high schools have lost the sense of educating people," explains Annie.



*Ikoro dreams of taking performance arts in high school, but will he be a victim of limited enrollment?*

recognized the value and importance of creativity and imagination by quoting one of his most famous sayings: "Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand".

For many children, the only place they can experience the arts is in their school. But not all schools have equal

ed programs in more than one third of all elementary schools. Parents raise money for a wide range of arts enrichment including part-time art instructors, performances by touring theatre companies, musical instruments and author visits. Most of the schools that report fundraising for the arts are schools where parents are capable of raising substantial amounts of money and are able to commit to many hours of volunteer work. It is ironic that these are the very same parents that

Ikoro is anxiously preparing for his audition as part of his admission requirements for one of the high schools he applied for. When asked what he will do if he is not accepted at any of the art schools, Ikoro replies, "I guess I will go to the neighbourhood school. Hopefully there will be some sort of arts program." Ikoro doesn't sound that hopeful.

*by Adonis Huggins and  
Faisal Mohammed*

## The Starving Artist: Why It's A Reality



**T**wnty-two-year-old Devon works from 7am to 2pm at a pancake house as a server out on the

Queensway. From 6pm till 11pm he works at a call centre in Scarborough. There are just enough hours in between for him to head back to his room at Kensington Market for a bite to eat before heading out again. He works weekends and holidays, but has arranged with his employers to have Wednesday night free—that is the time his writing circle meets.

Devon is makin' it. Like many young artists residing in Toronto, he works odd jobs for the city and in his spare time, practices his craft on the margin. It's part of the old cliché of the starving artist that is still very much a fact in Toronto for our workforce in the cultural sector.

The landmark report of the Massey Com-

mission of 1949 inaugurated the first substantial national policy for culture in Canada. The Royal Commission, under the chair of future Governor General Vincent Massey, was asked to survey Canada's cultural landscape such that "the Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions, and about their national life and common achievement." As the commission travelled across Canada, they were encouraged by the mushrooming numbers of independent arts organizations but were distressed by the lack of income support for even the most successful artists. Amongst its many recommendations was for the formation of the Canadian Arts Council (CAC), an arms-length crown organization to fund the

Canadian arts and artists in a fair and apolitical manner.

Along with the CBC, official Bilingualism, and universal healthcare, the formation of the CAC was one of the great nation-building programs of the post-war era. Every major Canadian artist (and many minor ones) has been a recipient of a council grant. Much in the same way that Renaissance artists like Michaelangelo and da Vinci produced their masterpieces under the auspices of great Italian princes, much of Canadian culture has been produced with the support of the "patron-state."

*Continued on page 10...*

# Life of a DJ



**G**rowing up in the heydays of hip-hop, JJ Rock has always been drawn to music and DJing. After arriving at Carleton University to study Criminology in 1997, JJ was still eager to continue her DJing passion. Within a year of starting university, she had joined forces

with one of Ottawa's leading DJ crews, Groove Train Entertainment. Groove Train's MC/DJ Scott Boogie invested many long hours training JJ and helped groom her into the talented DJ she is today.

JJ has graced the airwaves on Ottawa radio shows such as "The Friday Jam" (CHUO) and as a guest DJ on Kool FM's "Taking It from the Streets." Most notably she has played at The Ottawa Ex, Carleton University Frosh, Silk Lounge, Tequila Lounge, Tangerine Lounge, Laurentian Room, 416 Graffiti Expo, Honey Jam, and Canada Day street parties in Ottawa.

JJ Rock has mixed and cut at clubs in Montreal, Ottawa and Niagara. She even had the honor of opening for Chocclair when he performed at Carleton University in 1999. In 2003, she

also had the benefit of DJing for MC Eternia in Montreal, an event which was sponsored by Tripple Five Soul.

This past January, JJ was reunited with her passion for radio when she was crowned the newest member of the "Droppin Dimez Mix Show" which airs Monday nights from 11pm-12:30am on CKLN 88.1FM. In February, she released her sophomore promotional mix CD "Girls Gone Gangsta," which received great reviews. As a follow-up to her sophomore CD, this past August, she put out "Extreme Heat Alert" Vol. 1 which was filled with the latest club bangers, and could be heard playing in several different stores including the Bramalea City Centre, Champs on Yonge Street, The Jump Off and Rockwells clothing store.

In August, JJ Rock also participated in Honey Jam 10th Anniversary Talent Show and after-party alongside her co-host/DJ partner Mel Boogie from CKLN 88.1FM. This well-known, highly anticipated annual show received a great deal of media coverage.

Having enjoyed a successful start to the year, JJ Rock is in the studio again working on another mix CD and also a CD sampler which will feature various artists off the independent label, Life Records. JJ Rock is a hard-working DJ who intends to make it to the top. As a member of the prestigious Soulchoice DJ Record Pool, and one of the few established female DJ's in Canada, JJ Rock is dedicated to continue making a name herself in the hip-hop industry.

## The Key To Success



Kev and Will started playing the violin when they were around 13 years old, either after school or in the classroom. It didn't take them long to realize how versatile the violin was as an instrument, and soon they began experimenting with different tunes. Eventually, they named themselves Black Violin, and took their show on

the road. Their first gigs were on small stages, and they had to advertise themselves to a scrutinizing public. Because they were so motivated, however, their fame blossomed and continues to spread.

Of course, their journey to success was not smooth, nor can it be summed up in a neat paragraph. Even though Black Violin found a way to

revolutionize hip-hop and classical violin, they needed people to listen. This meant playing at as many gigs as they could, especially before young audiences, and making themselves an inspiration for hopeful artists. As Will B. states, "We were trying to do that for the kids, you know, because we grew up in inner cities and the way we got out is playing violins and it's kind of hard to believe but we trying to motivate the youths to do other things beside gang-bang, besides doing drugs, or sitting in a corner or whatever. We took a violin and we're doing some hip with it, we're doing some hip-hop, something that you could appreciate. So we really want to push the message to the kids that there are other things you could do with the things you are forced to do."

Aside from getting noticed, a good artist needs to be remembered by their audiences. Part of Black Violin's appeal is the fact that they wedded two totally different types of music.

The violin produces amazing tunes when played alone, but when you mix it with hip-hop, you create something loved by both instrumental and hip-hop fans. Kev Marcus explains, "Whether you like the hip-hop part of it or the violin part of it, whichever the sound of spectrum you're at, there's a place in between that you can meet. The voice can be heard, trying to unify the world within." This is so true; when fans identify a familiar tune played by Black Violin, their eyes and facial expressions light up. And even if one or two people don't like their music, this has never stopped Black Violin from persevering in their musical career. It's all about dedication, motivation, and trying to get the word out.

*Black Violin was one of the many performers present at the September 2005 Arts on the Radar Conference*

*by da Flava's Faisal Mohammed, 20*

This issue of Catch da Flava and the Arts on the Radar Conference were sponsored by:

### **THE ARTS NETWORK FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH**

*The Arts Network for Children and Youth (ANCY) is a national non-profit community arts service organization. ANCY was estab-*

*lished by a group of arts practitioners with a vision to develop sustainable arts programming for children and youth in communities across Canada.*

*ANCY's vision is that all children and youth have access to arts and creative activities in their communities.*

*For more information visit: <http://artsnetwork.ca/?q=home>*

### **VOICES FOR CHILDREN**

*Voices for Children promotes the well-being of children and youth in Ontario by disseminating information to influence policy, practice and awareness.*

*Voices for Children believes that with knowledge comes action and that the information we publish will advance policies, practice and attitudes which strengthen children's well-being.*

*For more information visit: <http://www.voicesforchildren.ca/>*

# The Choice Is Yours

## Do Drugs Enhance Creativity?

This has been an issue that researchers have studied and debated for decades, and the answer remains: it depends who you ask. Most regular users will assert that drugs do enhance creativity, while most non-users and occasional users will insist that they don't. Why the discrepancy? The problem lies in people's definitions of creativity. Although there is no question that drugs alter people's perceptions, emotions and behaviours, creativity is a loosely defined concept that may or may not entail an altered mind-state. Most people would agree that creativity entails the ability to generate many novel ideas and associations from one starting point. Some people are simply blessed with the ability to do this better than others.

Although drugs can mimic certain aspects of creativity and make people believe that they are more creative than usual (for example by eliciting unusual thinking or changes in perception), this does not necessarily foster artistic ingenuity. Furthermore, the experience of a so-called creative individual on a drug may differ from the experience of a less creative person. Take for example THC, the active ingredient in marijuana that some people believe induces some kinds of creativity. Did you know that your body naturally produces anandamide, which is a neurotransmitter that affects your brain exactly the same way THC does? Some people naturally produce more anandamide than others, so THC will not affect them the same way it does for others.

All drugs act on specific combinations

of receptors in your brain, and because everyone differs in the number of receptors they have and amount of neurotransmitters they produce, it is virtually impossible for somebody to replicate the complex processes that occur in a creative per-



*Contrary to common preconceptions, taking drugs does not foster artistic ingenuity*

son's mind. Additionally, not all chemicals produced by the body can be synthesized in a drug. Real creativity is more than a psychedelic vision on a hallucinogen, alcohol-induced inhibition, or smoking yourself into a stupor. It is a natural ability that allows you to *not* take the world at face-value.

This leads to the inevitable question: if drugs don't make you creative, then why are there so many outstanding artists such as Hemmingway or Kurt

Cobain who used and abused them?

What people don't realise is that while some artists did use drugs, many more artists who were equally successful did not. Also, what made these addicted artists stand out was

their talent, which was apparent in spite of - not because of - the fact that they were drug users. Most artists who abused drugs produced their best work prior to their reliance on psychoactive substances, and many died because of them, cutting short their potential years of productivity (see boxes below). Indeed, researchers have found that alcoholic fathers and sons actually score lower on creativity tests than non-alcoholic fathers and sons (University of California Alcohol

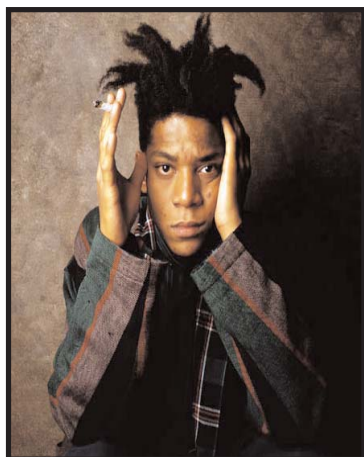
Research Centre, 1993).

The point is that drugs at best can make you believe you are more creative than you actually are, and at worst destroy you and all your genius. As time passes, drug users often find it harder to differentiate their talent from their vice and wrongly believe that the two reinforce each other. William Gibson, famous Sci-Fi author of Johnny Mnemonic and Neuro-mancer (on which The Matrix movies were based), explains it this way: "There is the matter of "state-specific learning," wherein skills acquired in an altered state prove difficult, even impossible, to import to an unaltered state. This can be a problem, should one find oneself for some reason unable (or perhaps, eventually, unwilling) to alter state. I suspect that this, more than anything else, accounts for much of the (Western) mythology of drugs and creativity. If you learn to write on drugs, you might find that you feel you need drugs in order to write."

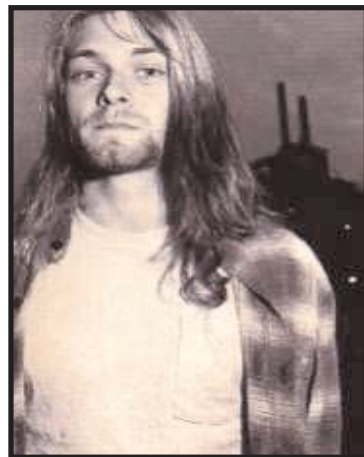


*by da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 22, University of Toronto*

## Artists Who Died of Drug Overdose



**JEAN MICHEL BASQUIAT**  
Painter, 1960-1988  
Died of heroin overdose.



**KURT COBAIN**  
Singer, 1967-1994  
Died of heroin overdose.



**JIMY HENDRIX**  
Singer, 1942-1970  
Died of barbituates overdose.



**BILLIE HOLIDAY**  
Singer, 1915-1959  
Died of heroin overdose.



**DYLAN THOMAN**  
Writer, 1914-1953  
Died of alcohol poisoning.



# NO!!

Why should curfews be imposed on all teens, when only a fraction of them actually damage society with their freedom by committing crimes, doing drugs and other dangerous behaviours? Even though parents in low-income areas worry when their teens are out late at night, that doesn't mean they should be locked at home; all that does is make them resentful, which I know from personal experience.

Before I moved to Regent Park, I lived around Dawes Rd. where crime wasn't a huge issue. Whenever I was playing outside, I never had to worry about coming home before dark because of the area I was living in. After moving to Regent Park, though, my mom started worrying about me to no end. My parents tried to impose a curfew on me when I was seventeen because of the alleged high crime rate in our area. The problem was, I wasn't hanging out late at night with the problem youth, and I felt unfairly distrusted. After a lot of arguing, my mom got over her fears after a few months, when she finally realised that I could take care of myself when I was out late, and that I didn't vandalize the neighbourhood or commit crimes.

Another reason for having a curfew is that kids need the freedom to make choices and socialize, and good kids will make wise decisions and responsible friends. Parents should rest assured that the main reasons teens are out are because they've met up with a friend and went to catch a movie, or are hanging out at their friend's house playing video games or even doing homework. If parents are still worried about what their kids are up to, they can get them a cell phone. The point is, healthy teens need to socialise to develop into successful adults. Kids get minimal time to socialize at school because they are supposed to concentrate on schoolwork during class, and eat lunch during lunch time. Once school is over, teens are stuck with mounds of homework and little time to keep in touch.

In conclusion, I think that teen curfews are totally useless unless the youth is a young offender, in which case police-imposed curfews are a good solution. This makes sense, because if you haven't done anything illegal, you shouldn't be punished for it; but if you do, then you have to face some consequences. But as for parents who want a universal curfew just because they don't trust their kids, remember: when teens are forced to do something they don't feel they deserve, they will rebel!



by da Flava's Faisal Mohammed, 19

# FACE OFF

## Should There Be A Legal Curfew For Teens?



**Many parents and politicians believe that having a curfew for teenagers will reduce violence and drug use among young people. Most teens, on the other hand, think that this is an unfair restriction of their freedom. Who is right? Two youths share their opposing views.**

Where do you stand on this issue? E-mail your thoughts and comments to:  
[catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com)



by da Flava's Marlon Husbands, 20

# YES!!

Whether or not there should be a law that sets a curfew for teenagers is a very touchy topic. While many young people might protest this kind of legislation, overall it is good because the majority of teenagers in Toronto either participate in illegal activity, are out late with their friends doing nothing, or just out until the very early hours of the morning causing trouble. When you think about it, there is really no reason for a 15-year-old to be out at midnight on a week-day.

Another reason why a legal curfew should be imposed is because there are so many teenagers in juvenile detention centres or in jail for major crimes that occurred after dark. This year alone Toronto has had 55 killings and 41 of them were gun shootings, the majority of which were related to teen gang violence. Furthermore, a lot of teenagers that are out late are both selling and doing drugs.

What I propose is not a total ban on night-time mobility for young people, since not all teens are troublemakers. After all, parents need to trust their soon-to-be-adult offspring. Therefore this law should only apply to teenagers 16 and under, who are at high risk of being influenced by the wrong crowd. Also, the curfew should be reasonable, say 11:30pm on weekdays, since all kids between within the curfew age range should still be in school. Other than that, it's unfair to restrict the freedoms of older responsible teens that get good grades, have a job, and are in after school programs.

A teen curfew doesn't have to be unreasonable, and it doesn't mean authorities can't work out a system that allows kids who need to stay out later on certain nights to get permission ahead of time from the police. But if we could stop other young people that are at risk of getting involved in criminal activity from staying out at night, this could prevent many of the killings that happen in Toronto.

## In Conversation With...

### Maurice Braithwaite

In 1993, the Safe School Act was introduced into all Ontario public schools to protect students from bullying and crime. Recently, however, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has pointed out that the "zero tolerance" disciplinary legislation may be discriminatory towards students who belong to racial minorities and students with disabilities. Parents and youth are also concerned that the policy is just plain ineffective. Catch da Flava's Connor McDermott had the chance to interview Maurice Braithwaite, the Program Coordinator of Project 180 (Fully Expelled Students Program), to get a better idea about what's really happening.

**da Flava:** What is the Safe School Act?

**Maurice:** The act was designed to make sure that every school environment was safe from violence, drugs and bullying so everybody can have the opportunity to grow.

**da Flava:** When was the act put in place?

**Maurice:** There has been three different tiers of acts. In Toronto, before the Toronto District School Board [TDSB] there were six different boards in the city. There was the city of Scarborough, city of North York, Toronto, East York and York. Each of these areas had their own separate school boards and each area governed their Safe School Act differently. [...] In 1999 when the Provincial Government

came into power they legislated that the Safe Schools Act ran across the whole province of Ontario.

**da Flava:** What types of misbehavior can you be suspended for?

**Maurice:** Suspension and expulsions are two different things. Suspensions are time-allotted, so anyone can be suspended from one day up to twenty-one days. There are limited expulsions which means you're totally out of the schools system. You can be limitedly expelled from a school board for one full year or a semester, full expulsions which is our program (Project 180) is indefinite which means you can be expelled from all publicly funded school boards in the whole province of Ontario.

**da Flava:** Does the code of conduct apply to anyone besides students?

**Maurice:** It applies to all school functions, day school, night school, adult school and continuing education schools so it applies straight across the board for anyone who is being publicly funded by the government for schools to get their high school diploma.

**da Flava:** Some criticism of the Safe School Act is that it unfairly targets students of color.

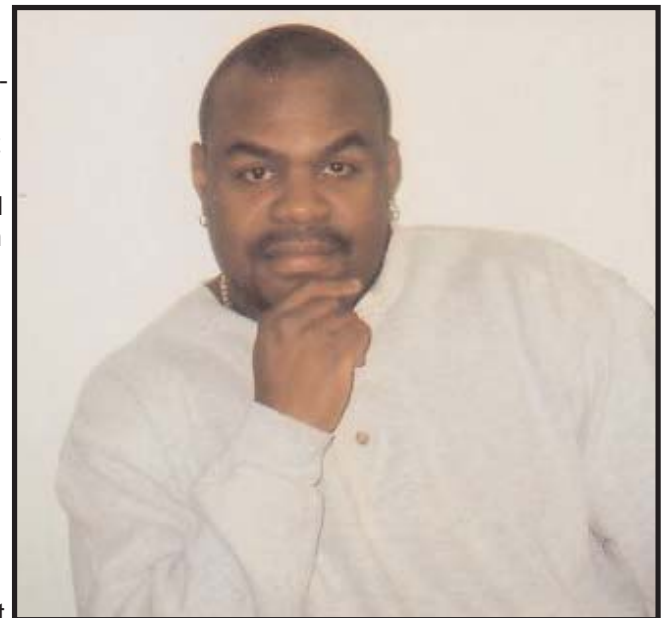
**Maurice:** [...] On the surface when you look at it you do see the majority of colored kids or kids from different ethnic backgrounds, but also a lot of

them have to come from another country were they deal with different situations a certain way and you don't know what it means coming to Canada and what the laws are then you going to run into some problems. I think one of the things we need to do is to educate people who first come to the country, on what the laws are and what we expect here and that way we can give them a chance to come in and understand what it is to live for and what is acceptable.

**da Flava:** Another criticism is that it contributes to the drop out rate.

**Maurice:** [...] I don't think the expulsion or the safe school act has a lot to do with the number of kids dropping out. [...] I think what we have to look at is the types of education and the types of things we are introducing to the kids and the way they learn this, I think there are a lot of kids out there that can't sit in a traditional classroom and learn with the teacher at the blackboard [...], so we need to gear education to there type of learning and type of strengths that will encourage them to want to succeed better.

**da Flava:** Is there anything else that I have missed that you would like to



add?

**Maurice:** Well personally I think that the expulsion and the safe school act is a good thing but I think there are some modifications that need to happen to it. As parent I like to know that my kid is going to a school that is safe and that the kids are going there to learn and become contributing citizens to society. [...] The principal of the school has the discretion to go which way he/she wants to go in terms of consequences to the incident that happens in the school, so there are programs set up that kids that are expelled come to and hopefully people will become aware that there is a lot of support that people can access if they need to get it.

by da Flava's Connor McDermott, 20

...Continued from page 6



Although Canada was one of the early adapters of state-support of the arts, in recent years, cutbacks in the Federal budget have seriously threatened the cultural

health of this country. The CAC estimates that for the year 2004-2005, they spent only \$4.77 per Canadian, or about the price of lunch. And, while there is an estimated 130,000 artists in Canada, less than 2% receives a grant in a funding year. The CAC also believes that outside of the United States, our government funding for the arts is low compared to other countries that belong to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Data reflecting the real financial state of artists are not forthcoming. The Human Resources Department of Canada does not have an entry available for the average wage or employment prospects under the relevant National Occupation Code for either Visual Artists (5136) or Musicians (5133). There is an entry for Writers (5121) that lists their average hourly wage at \$25.50, but NOC 5121 encompasses writers of all sorts, not just the type that

produces literary fiction.

A more telling number is the ratio of total number of artists in a field and the number that work in the field on a part-time basis. The Labour Force Survey of 2000 estimates that there were 119,800 people that listed artist as an occupation. There were a total of 12433 visual artists but 4205 considered visual arts as their part-time work. For writers, the total number was 22424, with 6370 that listed writing as part-time. For musicians the numbers are more extreme: 30252 persons considered themselves musicians but 21697 did it part-time. Therefore, less than one-third of musicians could support themselves in the chosen field and had to support themselves by other means.

Back to Devon. He is writing a new short story at the local laundromat while waiting for his whites to dry. He has just remembered the story of the Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Anderson as his

eyes gaze outside at the frost and snow. When the final cycle ends for the washer, he scoops out the lint from the filter in the dryer. He has no dryer sheets-this is the last of his laundry budget till the next month. He pops in a quarter and loads his clothes.



by da Flava's Sammy Lao, 24

# Ask da Sexpert

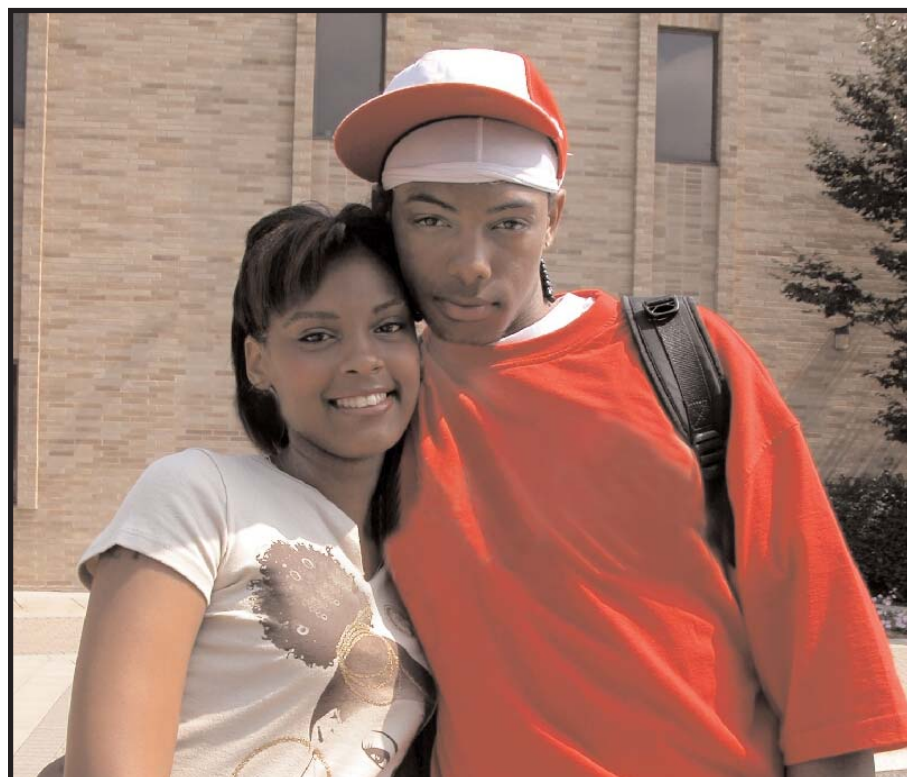
## The Art of Sexual Expression

When most of us think about sexuality, we think about sex. It's hard not to when one word is basically an extension of the other. However, even though our sexuality can be manifested through sexual activities such as hugging, kissing, and/or sexual intercourse, our sexuality consists of a lot more than just what we do when we are naked. In fact, our sexuality has more to do with who we are and how we behave when our clothes are on, than what we do when they are off.

Sexuality consists of how we express our feelings of intimacy with other human beings, as well as how we express our identities through sex. Our sexuality influence what we wear, what music we listen to, whose company we prefer to be in, and how we act when we are in their company. In short, sexuality influences nearly every aspect of our lives, and these values are made evident to others through our behaviours and attitudes.

Because our sexuality consist of so much more than our sexual relationships, it is important to understand how we can express our sexual desires and feelings of intimacy towards the ones who bring out these feelings in us. For example, how can you show your partner that you appreciate their thoughtfulness? Sexual intimacy is a great way to show your partner how you feel about them in mature and responsible relationships; however, it may not express how you feel as clearly as other things you could do. For example, demonstrating your gratitude by writing a letter or a

poem for your loved one would probably be more meaningful and memorable than a bedroom romp. Others might prefer to show their affection and sexuality through painting, singing, and even rapping. Think



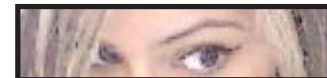
about all the ways that you can reciprocate the nice things your partner does for you.

While your creative juices are flowing, don't forget the value of sensuality, one of the primary components of sexuality. Denying this aspect of sexuality would be denying a critical part of health and normal development. Touching, holding, and caressing are ways to promote positive feelings of

intimacy without engaging in sexual intercourse. Getting emotionally close to another person, revealing our deepest thoughts and feelings with our loved ones, and having those feelings returned can also be enor-

another. Talk to your partner, regardless of whether or not you are sexually involved with them. This is critical in a stable relationship.

Alternative forms of sexual expression are gaining wide appeal among young people because of the rising number of circulating STDs and the high rate of teenage pregnancy. It's wise for us to think about ways we can express ourselves to our partners and loved ones without putting ourselves at unnecessary risk. It is also important to remember that self-love, self-respect, and self-appreciation are important components of healthy sexual development. If we do not show love, respect, and concern for ourselves, it is difficult for others to feel loved, respected or cared for by us. Your sexuality is yours and you can express it in whatever way you feel comfortable. It is crucial in a relationship to remember to stay true to yourself, your values and beliefs!



da Flava's Sexpert

**Do you have any questions or concerns for da Sexpert? Don't be afraid to ask!**

**E-mail me:  
sexpert@catchdaflava.com**

**da Sexpert offers advice about relationships and sex in every issue of *Catch da Flava*.**

## Regent Park Redevelopment Updates

### Selected developer walks away from the redevelopment

TCHC has issued a new call for proposals for the phase 1 development. Cresford Developments Corp, the developer that won the competitive bid to redevelop the first phase of Regent Park, has walked away from the deal. Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), which manages the city's public housing units, selected Cresford Developments Corp in September to build the first phase of Regent Park. The proposal was still in the process of negotiation when Cresford announced that

it would not proceed with the redevelopment. No further explanation was offered by the company or by TCHC who claim not to know why Cresford rejected the deal.

The first phase of the \$1 billion redevelopment is spread out over four blocks in the area of Parliament, Oak, Sackville and Dundas Sts. Three of the four blocks are to be developed by a private developer. The fourth block will be developed by Toronto Community Housing. Construction is to begin in 2006.

### Relocation Update

All tenants occupying Phase 1 have accepted a relocation unit and have a moving date within the next few weeks. TCHC expects that the buildings will be vacant by November 30. After this date, the Relocation Office at 415 Gerrard Street will close. Demolition is expected to begin in December. Toronto Community Housing will be in contact with phase 1 tenants throughout the redevelopment. When completed, tenants will select units in the order that they left Regent Park. Tenants with physical disabilities will be given

priority for the accessible units.

There will be a report on the phase 1 relocation that will consider feedback from tenants, Toronto Community Housing staff, and various agencies. The main purpose of collecting feedback will be to look at ways to improve the process in future relocations. Once the report is complete, TCHC plans to make it available to the public.

If you have any relocation questions or concerns please direct them to Jennifer Cargneli, Relocation Manager at the CHU 27 office.

# REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

## Regent Park Film Festival A Success

The Regent Park Film Festival was held at Nelson Mandela Park Public School from November 9th-15th to celebrate films and documentaries from around the world. This year the spotlight was on East Asia. Films from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines were featured, as well as works by Asian-Canadian filmmakers. Regent Park Focus graced the screens on opening night from 5pm-7pm, showcasing a series of youth-produced videos and documentaries for the crowd to enjoy.



## TCHC Staff Changes



After more than two years of working as a Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) Health Promotion Officer in Regent Park, Sandra González Ponce has taken on a new position with TCHC as a Revitalization Consultant. Sandra will be assigned to another community. Heather Tillock has been hired as Community Revitalization Consultant for Regent Park and will support the

committees in which Sandra was previously involved. A Health Promotion Officer will be hired in January to work with the CHU 27 tenant council (i.e. the tenant representatives) and the maintenance committee, and engage in community development work. For more information contact Liz Root, Development Officer.

*The Regent Park CHU 27 Office is located at: 19 Belshaw Place, Toronto ON, M5A 3H7  
Tel: 416-981-6985*

## Regent Park Focus Happenings

### Photography Classes are Back!

Learn the basics of digital and dark-room photography FREE! Sundays from 2pm-4pm, open to youth ages 13-18.

After School Photography Program for youth under 13 years old. Starts January 9th 2006, Thursdays from 3:30pm-5:00pm

### Breakdancing Mondays

Youth 13-18 can attend FREE breakdancing classes from 4:30pm-6:30pm.

### Catch da Flava Radio

Tune in to Catch da Flava Radio every Tuesday at 7:30pm on CKLN 88.1FM to catch up on the latest youth-related news, hear interviews with special guests and participate in heated debates about issues YOU care about.

Want to be a radio host or learn how to tech? Come to the Regent Park Focus on Tuesdays at 6:00pm.

### Catch da Flava Newspaper

Submit your poetry, opinion pieces and articles to Catch da Flava newspaper by going to [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)

Also come out to our weekly newspaper meetings Tuesdays at 6:00pm at the Regent Park Focus to get assignments and share your ideas.

### DJ Thursdays

DJ workshops are returning this season on Thursdays from 5:00pm-8:00pm. FREE to youth 13-18.

Regent Park Focus  
600 Dundas St. E (rear basement)  
(416) 863-1074

## Nelson Mandel Park Becomes Model Inner City School

Firgrove, Willow Park and Nelson Mandela Park schools are being recommended as the first three Model Inner City Schools by the Inner City Advisory Committee (ICAC). This means that they will be receiving \$1 million in additional support for the school and the community from the Toronto District School Board, and serve as model "lighthouse" institutions for schools in other areas.

The School Visiting Teams were impressed with the schools they visited and also moved by their immense needs. The ICAC has further proposed the following:

1) that 6 outreach workers be hired to support the additional 12 schools that applied to be Model Schools;

2) to actively advocate and work with all levels of government to secure funding and resources in order to ensure sustainability for both the Model Schools and to support identified needs of remaining schools in all seven clusters;

3) that \$3.5 million be allocated from the 2006/7 budget for the associated implementation costs of the three Model Schools in September 2006.



## English For the Workplace

**Develop your communication skills for the workplace.** Learn telephone and interview skills, grammar, reading, information about the Canadian employment market and more. These classes are for **intermediate level** (level 4+) adult ESL students interested in improving their workplace communication skills.

**WHEN:** Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1 - 3:30pm starting from January 17 to March 10, 2005.

**WHERE:** 44 Blevins Place (South of intersection at Dundas and Sumach St.)

For more information and to book an appointment for your admission assessment, call Robyn at 416-203-7885 or 416-363-8025.

**Space is limited.** Students accepted on a first come first served basis.



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