

# Catch da Flava

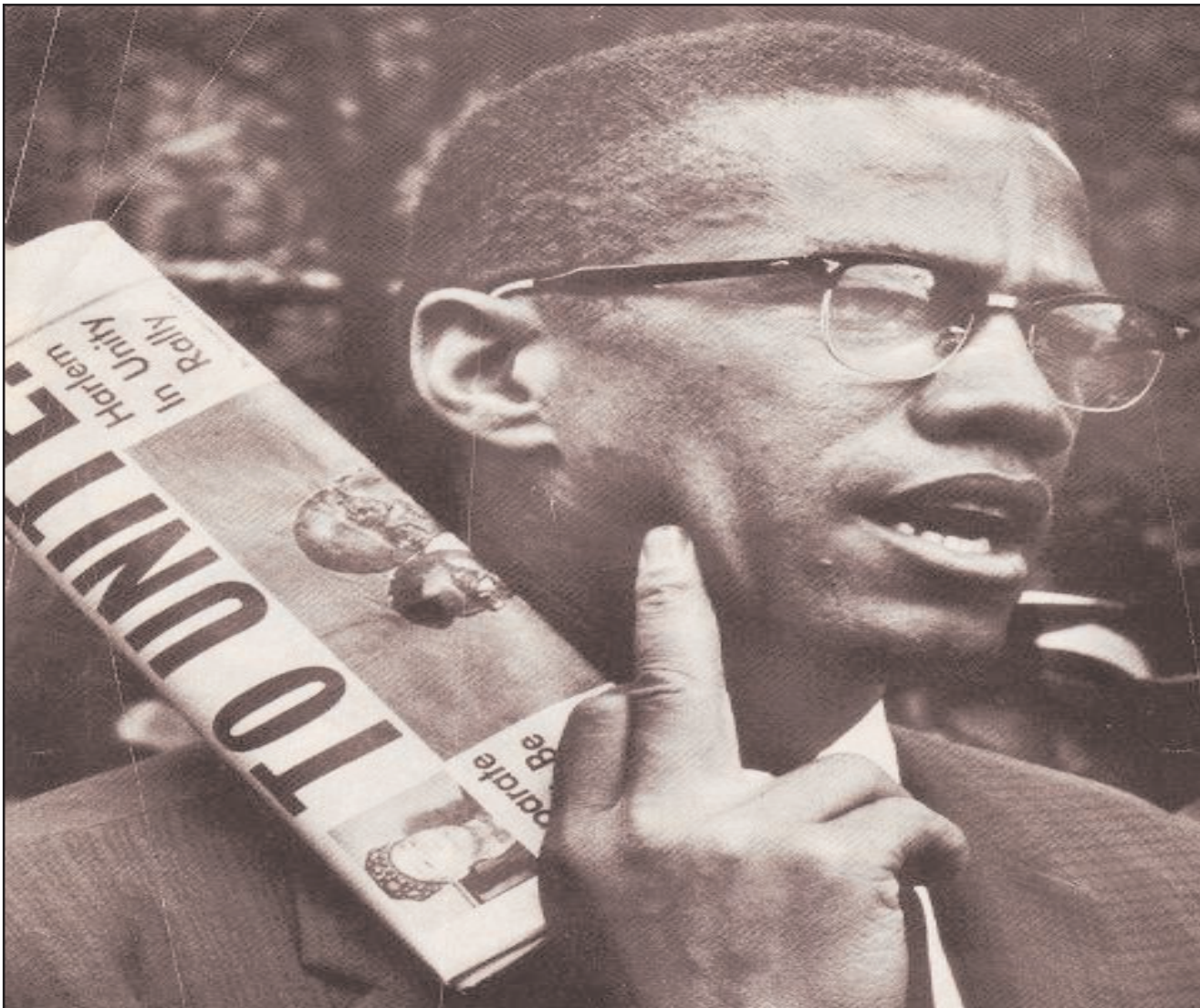
April 2005

www.catchdaflava.com

Volume 10 Issue 2

Youth and Student Newspaper Produced by the Regent Park Focus

## Fifty Years of Black Activism



### Civil Rights and the Meaning of Malcolm

The Civil Rights Movement of the 50's and 60's is often told as a simple tale of passive non-violent demonstrators winning the hearts and minds of the American public and triumphing over seemingly insurmountable forces of evil. In this tale Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. is heralded as the sole visionary who led the African American quest for integration, equality and justice. If we are told anything about Malcolm X at all, he is portrayed at best, as a minor figure of the era who preached violence, segregation and hatred of white people.

Unfortunately, the truth is much more complicated and this simple version of the story leaves out the profound significance of Malcolm X and the enormous impact that he had on the civil rights movement. So who was Malcolm X and what did he stand for?

In the 1950's in many parts of Canada and most southern states in America, public places were racially segregated. There were separate schools, separate seats on buses and in theatres, and separate areas in restaurants for whites and for blacks. In the US, state and local laws also prevented black Americans from voting. Beginning in the 1950's many groups and people--black and white--began working to change these laws and these activities became known as the Civil Rights Movement. The most prominent spokesman of the movement was Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. who preached a philosophy of non-violent resistance.

The emergence of Malcolm X both as a spokesperson for the Nation of Islam and as a prominent African American leader coincided with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 onwards. Like Reverend King, Malcolm X was a great orator. Unlike King, however, Malcolm rejected the philosophy of non-violence and integration and provided the single most forceful alternative to Martin Luther King.

Malcolm X did not believe that America was capable of dismantling its systems of discrimination and oppression. Without doing so, Malcolm X was convinced that only a comparatively few African Americans could benefit from integration. Instead, Malcolm X urged African Americans to gain control of their communities both politically and economically. Only when African Americans had ownership of their own homes, businesses, politicians, schools and cultural institutions could there be any talk of integration.

*"My first impression was how could a black man talk about the government, white people, and act so bold, and not be shot at? [...] How could he say those things? Only God must be protecting him."*

*-Mohammed Ali speaking about Malcolm X (1964)*



**Dealing with difficult teachers**

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**The real story behind the X-Men**

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## POET'S CORNER

### *Fight or Flight*

"You!"

*I heard the voice and all my senses, like an  
ancient computer, started up  
and came online.*

"You guy!"

*I took one very deep breath to stretch out my  
chest,  
felt my muscles swell and connect to each other,  
electric shocks of fear and anxiety  
fusing them together to form  
a knuckle-throwing being and then I turned,  
already braced.*

*There were three of them  
and they walked with a purpose.  
Craning their necks to look around  
as they walked up on me.*

"I move at five times speed John Carver!"

"Blah"

*and that was that.  
Three against one and what's done will be done.*

**T. Wayne**

## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

*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.

*Catch da Flava* welcomes letters and submissions from young people (up to age 24). Submissions should be no longer 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.

NEXT DEADLINE FOR  
SUBMISSIONS IS:  
April 30, 2005  
Circulation: 10, 000

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

**Published Since 1995**

# Guest Editorial

## Celebrating 50 years of Black Activism

The history of African Canadians has been told in many ways: through oral history, traditional historical texts, literature, documentary films, academic papers and community reports.

Although Toronto has played a central role in the history of African-Canadians, there remains no single, comprehensive, documented account of social and political activism within Toronto's African-Canadian community. Indeed, there is no focused historical account which places the struggles against anti-black racism, as led by peoples of African descent in Toronto, within the context of Canadian progress in equality of rights and expanding notions of social justice.

The 50 Years of Black Activism Project is intent on highlighting this history, and sets out to: 1) Define black activism, and show how it can be seen in the context of the African-Canadian community over the past 50 years; and 2) Identify the social movements and community organizations led by African Canadians which have challenged racism over the past 50 years.

Activism is a form of resistance to oppressive systems which act as barriers to the legitimate rights and aspirations of dominated groups and classes in society. Resistance occurs at the level of ideas, as well as through social and political organization and action. Activism emboldens and enlightens oppressed people while challenging those who support and/or perpetuate oppression. It is a transformational process that remakes society in ways that

bring about equity, social justice and general liberation for all human beings.

Integral to the varying forms of black activism is resistance to those historical and contemporary forces which give rise to and reinforce white domination, power and privilege. Black activism, therefore, challenges the interconnected structural and institutional systems of oppression and exploitation, in their varied manifestations (racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, homophobia, ageism), along with the ideological myths that sustain them.

Toronto's black activists can be justly proud of their contribution to humanizing Canadian society. Not only have they resisted oppressive and exploitative forces, but they have also helped to build institutions that nurture and cultivate community.

The aim of the 50 Years of Black Activism in Toronto project is to highlight a half century of struggles by black movements and organizations involved in activist work in the areas of immigration and employment, human rights and justice, sports and recreation, media and culture, criminal justice, and education. These struggles have been linked to broader global struggles from anti-colonial to anti-apartheid, labour to environmental, feminist to anti-homophobia, civil rights to human rights, and anti-racist to aboriginal.

Given our rich history of political and cultural activity, black activists will continue to work towards the kind of society we imagine: one based on equality, human rights, social justice and freedom.

*by the 50 Years Committee of Black  
Activism in Toronto, 416-545-0796 x. 6227  
(Regent Park Focus is a partner of the 50  
Years Committee.)*



*The aim of the 50 Years of Black Activism in Toronto project is to document and highlight a half-century of struggles by individuals, movements and organizations involved in black activist work in Toronto.*



VOLUME 10 ISSUE 2  
APRIL 2005

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THIS ISSUE WAS PRODUCED IN PARTNER-  
SHIP WITH CKLN 88.1FM AND THE 50  
YEARS COMMITTEE OF BLACK ACTIVISM.

CATCH DA FLAVA IS SPONSORED BY:  
THE TIPPET FOUNDATION, THE LAIDLAW  
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# Teacher Knows Best

## My Teacher is Ruining My Life!

So you have teachers you don't get along with. Who hasn't, in their time as a student? For the most part, you're not gonna like what I have to say, so you better read this to see if you agree.

Check out these student comments:

Ms. #\$\$^ is such a bee-och!  
Mr. @\$% is a totally wack!  
Ms. %^&\* is sooooooooooooooooo mean!

Sound familiar? Keep reading, it's gonna get ugly...

Here are some daily laments from personal experience for many of the problems for which students cry INJUSTICE!!!

*"Mr. \*^%\$# gave me a detention for NO reason!"*

**Translation:** I came late, hit the guy who sits in front of me with my binder as I strolled by, chewing gum like a camel while I played with an elastic band...

**The real deal:** Teachers do not give out detentions to kids who arrive on time, follow the rules and complete their school work. Teachers laugh in the staff room at your expense because we find it odd that after so many years as students some of you don't get this very logical concept.

**Teacher:** You waste my time, I'll waste



yours. Teachers hate detentions as much as or more than students do. What do you think I'd rather do: leave school or baby-sit?

*"Ms. #\$\$^&\*! is teaching us stuff we will never need to know!"*

**Translation:** I am not interested in learning this subject and I would rather be home watching TV and chatting on MSN.

**The real deal:** No one is ever going to

pay you to watch TV or chat on MSN, so be thankful someone is trying to teach you some skills. You will need to read, write and do arithmetic every day of your life.

**Teacher:** It's amazing how much of the stuff you think is totally pointless will work to your benefit in the future. If you don't believe me, just ask the millionaire who has the record on Jeopardy.

*"Mr. @\$%\* is out to get me, he picks on me constantly!"*

**Translation:** I am an attention seeker. I don't realize it, but I'll take negative attention as easily as I'll take positive attention. I am often the loudest in my class and am an easy target for the teacher because of my obnoxious behaviour.

**The real deal:** Most teachers have a sense of humour. Unfortunately, pulling a chair from underneath a student just as they are about to sit down is not funny. Such behaviour is childish, disrespectful and hurtful, and they are often committed by students who have serious issues.

**Teacher:** Wake up and smell the Fruit Loops! You need to take responsibility for your actions (that means realize that what YOU do has an effect on others) and stop blaming others for problems you are helping to create.

Now alright, I know that your complaints against teachers are not all completely unfounded. In every profession there are

people who are just totally wrong for their line of work. For example, the swimming instructor who assured your parents you could swim without a lifejacket and proceeded to push you off the deep end diving board when you were 5 years old. The nurse who promised your injection wouldn't hurt, as you screamed and sent all the patients in the waiting room running out the front door. The salesperson that encouraged you to buy that "fabulous" outfit because it looked amazing on you--yeah amazing for a beached whale being arrested by the ocean's fashion police...Working in the teaching trenches, I admit some teachers are just not suited for the job. Unfortunately, they have made an inappropriate personal choice by working in the teaching profession.

On a very serious note, if you find yourself in a conflict situation with a teacher, talk to him or her in a mature manner. Parents/guardians are also important allies who need to be included in the dialogue. If you prefer, talk to the principal or guidance counsellor at your school. Discrimination and unfair treatment is a serious matter and you need to let people you trust know about your difficulties.

If you are experiencing discrimination or harassment with a teacher or an administrator at school, you should contact the Human Rights Office. It is also recommended to keep a written record of what you are experiencing. Be sure to include details of the incident(s) and the name of any witnesses. If you are a Toronto District School Board student you can contact the Human Rights Office at 416-393-1028. There are formal complaint forms online at [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca). Enter the word "harassment" in the search section and you can print the form.

Well, keep your head up kiddo! If you think dealing with your teacher is a headache, just wait 'til you have to deal with your boss!



by Michelle Ricketts, teacher at Dr. Marion Hillard Senior Public School

## Letters to the Editor

The anonymous article on depression [Winter 2005 issue] in youth was interesting, and well-written. I think the topic could be explored further in a follow-up article, on methods of treating including common anti-depressants, their side-effects (fatigue, effects on sex drive, etc.), and maybe also cost (working youth with little income and no health insurance will need to know what options are available to them).

[...]I know it's a common problem for youth, and there's a strong stigma still surrounding depression, and knowledge of what causes it and how it can be treated might go a long way towards a more common understanding of depression as an illness.

Sarah

Just a thought, you may not have any control over this, but you may want to change the Regent Park name [of the article in the Winter 2005 issue] "rags to riches" to something more positively managed such as "former to future."

I work in public social housing here in the "sunny south" and that [...] sure caught my eye and thought process.

Overall, the plan sounds great - huge and great - we'll be watching and learning from the development.

It's nice to see/read about your coverage ... keep up the good work.

Good luck,

Janice

Got something to say about what you read in Catch da Flava? We'd love to hear from you! Send your letters to [catchmail.catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail.catchdaflava.com)



# What's Your Beef?

## Unfair Policies for International Students in Canada



According to Canada's immigration policy, international students are allowed to look for a job related to their degree in Canada upon graduation. They must find employment in their field within three months after they graduate in order to apply for a work permit. This policy is unfair and designed to discourage those students from staying in Canada.

There are many foreign students studying in Canada. At York University alone, there are 3000 internationals. Many lack the financial freedom to stay here and look for a job; many leave after they graduate since the system is extremely discouraging and pressuring. This article

raises the following question: Why are they forced to leave this country, when Canada accepts 150,000 immigrants per year from all over the world? Typically, an international undergraduate student lives in Canada for four years and pays \$20,000 CAN each year for tuition and living expenses. The majority of them work part-time on campus to support themselves. Therefore by the time they graduate, they already have the so-called "Canadian experience" that employers look for. Furthermore, they are adjusted to Canadian culture and hold a Canadian university degree.

Unfortunately, these students are faced with the unreasonable, inevitable three-month deadline. How many Canadian citizens do you know who have found a decent job in a three-month period right after they graduated? How are international students expected to find a job, specifically related to their degree, in such a short period of time? It is especially difficult when they don't have any networks outside their university since they are not allowed to work off-campus. Why is there not a system in place to help these students get involved outside their school, giving them a chance to network with

people in their related fields? Why isn't there an internship program regulated by government agencies for international students who graduate with a bachelor's degree? This could make the transition from school to the labour force easier for international students, while benefiting the Canadian government at the same time.

As it stands, however, there is simply no support system for graduating international students. Once they graduate, they are denied access to basic resources that were once available to them (such as a University Health Insurance Plan health card, work on campus, free library access etc.). Career services merely give tips on "How to write a resume" when they should be providing more meaningful help such as providing job-search websites, related associations, and networking events. An international's superb resume does not mean anything unless he/she finds a potential employer who looks at it. Many foreign students live on campus, so the university becomes their home. Once out of school, they feel like fish out of water. They are neither a Canadian citizen nor a student anymore, but something in between. They literally become legal aliens. They slide down the cracks of the welfare system. Their health insurance

plan expires two months after graduation. No wonder they feel alienated and unwanted. What does this suggest about multiculturalism in Canada? What does this suggest about integration and immigration policies? International students spend their money and four years of their lives for education in Canada. It is truly sad that they have to struggle so hard to get a decent job.

The government should really revise its immigration policies for students studying in Canada with a study permit. This is a very crucial issue that is not brought into light very often. International students are already a part of Canadian society. The government should find a way to integrate them into the workforce before looking for potential immigrants from abroad!



da Flava's Bihter Tomen, 23

## Too Much Teen Violence

An issue that various help lines and foundations have touched on is violence among teens. The advice they give is not new to any of us: when you're in trouble, the only solution is to tell somebody. But has this stopped violence in our neighbourhoods? Have we actually begun to realize the severity of teen violence?

In the last year, dozens of stories about teenage violence have invaded our newspapers; written proof that violent adolescent behaviour has not ceased. Even in the finest neighbourhoods, aggressive teenage urchins are on the prowl. We've heard of them, seen them in action, and not surprisingly many of us even know them. These aggressive teens are everywhere and they've started banding to form gangs.

Why is this aggressive lifestyle so prominent at such a young age? What could be the cause of all this violence?

There are many reasons why youngsters find it irresistible to fight on the streets. First and foremost, violence at home is strongly correlated to violent behaviour outside the house. Witnessing aggression, especially in a home setting, can signifi-



cantly contribute to a child's behavioural problems. Of course, not every child can be isolated from the exposure of violence because of television and the media, but when violence is associated with parents or siblings, the experience is much harsher and seemingly acceptable.

Media also plays a significant role in the problem. Violence in our media is on a threefold rise, even if the actual rate of violent crimes in North America is at its lowest since the 60s and 70s. Aside from watching antagonism on the news, we are

bombarded with television series that portray incredible violent behaviour with weapons. These series are cartoons with animated characters that possess, in their virtual world, weapons that are ever so far-fetched. Children grow up loving animated figures that kill and battle with imaginative weaponry, so is it

really hard to believe that these shows could influence such behaviour in real life?

Aside from television, teens are especially manipulated by today's music industry. It is a big part of what makes us who we are. The kind of music we listen to often defines the type of person we want to be. It affects our style of clothing, our choices in life, and also our language. Many have already opposed to rap star Eminem, whose lyrics controversial and offensive in many ways. Numerous rap artists like

him use foul language and glorify offensive topics. This makes us pose the question: could they influence our unsuitable behaviour?

The bigger question is, how can we overcome today's teenage violence? Will we need to censor the media and ban the creation of violent video games? It is a hard step to take, especially in a society that has become almost immune to this violence.

Regardless, the reality is that we must find another way to be entertained because today, people are getting hurt. NO, they are being killed.



da Flava's Bo San Chan, 18, Malvern Collegiate



# Global Struggles

## Sudan's "Peace" Accord

**A**lmost three months ago, a peace accord was signed between the corrupted Islamic government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. I was happy and excited because it was such an amazing occasion, but soon my joy and praise turned into outrage, anger and disgust.

Why did my joy turn in to anger? Well, first of all I learnt that the government of Sudan was going to be forgiven for tis crimes against humanity. The international community has turned a blind eye to the fact that this government has killed more than 2 million people and displaced over 4 million Sudanese over the last 20 years. This government has denied basic necessities such as clean water, food, and medical attention to millions of Southern Sudanese. Also over the past 16 months, this corrupted government hired militias to invade the region of Darfur to kill and burn thousands non-Muslim Sudanese.

What is now happening in Darfur happened in Rwanda 10 years ago: it was genocide, the elimination of one ethnic group through murder. When it happened to Bosnia, a country in the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations wasn't hesitant to impose sanctions and take military action to protect the lives of Bosnian Muslims against oppression by Serbia and



*Refugees in a camp in northern Darfur*

Bosnian Serbs. So why now is the United Nations being stubbornly neutral? Why doesn't the UN want to save millions of innocent people? Why doesn't the international community hold the government of Sudan responsible for the millions of lives they took?

In the 1990s, Bill Clinton tried to make himself and his administration the compassionate ear to African issues. During much-publicized trips to the continent, the ex-President proclaimed great concern and commitment to Africans. But at the

same time, the Clinton Administration ignored the genocide in Rwanda and failed to address the growing concern of HIV/AIDS.

The Bush Administration isn't different from Clinton's. In fact in 2000, Bush said that Africa wasn't his priority. The Bush administration's only interests in Africa are oil and strategic allies in the "war on terror," and nothing more.

The United States and the United Nations are both doing nothing help the situation

in Sudan. As long as the US is preoccupied with Iraq, the UN nations are fighting amongst one another, and the rest of the world is still focused on the Tsunami, people in Darfur will continue to die, and Sudan will never see or taste peace and freedom.

With support from Regent Park Focus and Catch da Flava, I am starting an African Youth Action Committee. The role of the committee is to educate ourselves and our community about the enormous issues facing Africa, and to advocate for greater Canadian involvement and action in its affairs. Our first meeting will be held in early May. Contact Regent Park Focus at 416-863-1074 or email me at [emmanuel@catchdaflava.com](mailto:emmanuel@catchdaflava.com) if you are interested.



*da Flava's Emmanuel Kedini, 23*

## AIDS in Africa

**A**frica is the second largest continent and contains 13% of the world's population. It also has the largest number of people affected with AIDS (also known as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). AIDS begins with the contraction of HIV, a deadly virus that attacks the body's immune system and eventually leads to AIDS. The 3 commonest ways to get HIV is through sexual intercourse with an infected person, contact with contaminated blood, and transmission from an infected mother to her child before or during birth.

According to The Report on Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic (UNAIDS, 2004), 2.2 million people in sub-Saharan Africa died from AIDS at the end of 2003. This is about the same as the total number of people who currently reside in Toronto. Sub-Saharan Africa has more cases of



AIDS than any other African region. Of the estimated 14,000 AIDS infections that occur each day worldwide, about half are in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, about 70% of all people infected with AIDS live in

this region. In some countries in the southern part of the continent including Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe, more than 30% of the population has HIV or AIDS.

People with HIV are not any different from uninfected people. Those who carry the virus are still able to live relatively normal lives until their immune systems fail, but if given appropriate medical intervention, this could be decades after the initial infection. People with AIDS and HIV should help fight the disease because the more assured and self-aware they are, the better their chances of showing people that the disease is treatable and preventable. It is up to politicians and sympathetic people to get the word out about HIV and AIDS in order to bring medical supplies to Africa and stop this quiet killer from claiming more lives.

*by da Flava's Jessica Uthayakumaran, 14, Jarvis Collegiate Institute*

**What are your opinions and concerns about what's happening around the world?  
Voice your views at [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)!**



# Fifty Years of Black Activism

...continued from cover

*"Whenever you take money out of the neighborhood and spend it in another neighborhood, the neighborhood in which you spend it gets richer and richer, and the neighborhood from which you take it gets poorer and poorer. This creates a ghetto, as now exists in every so-called Negro community in this country. If the Negro isn't spending his money downtown with what we call 'the man,' 'the man' is himself right in the Negro community. All the stores are run by the white man, who takes the money out of the community as soon as the sun sets. [...] We have to teach our people the importance of establishing and owning businesses. Thereby we can create employment for ourselves, instead of having to wait to boycott stores and businesses to demand that they give us a job."* (Malcolm X, Harvard University, March 1964)

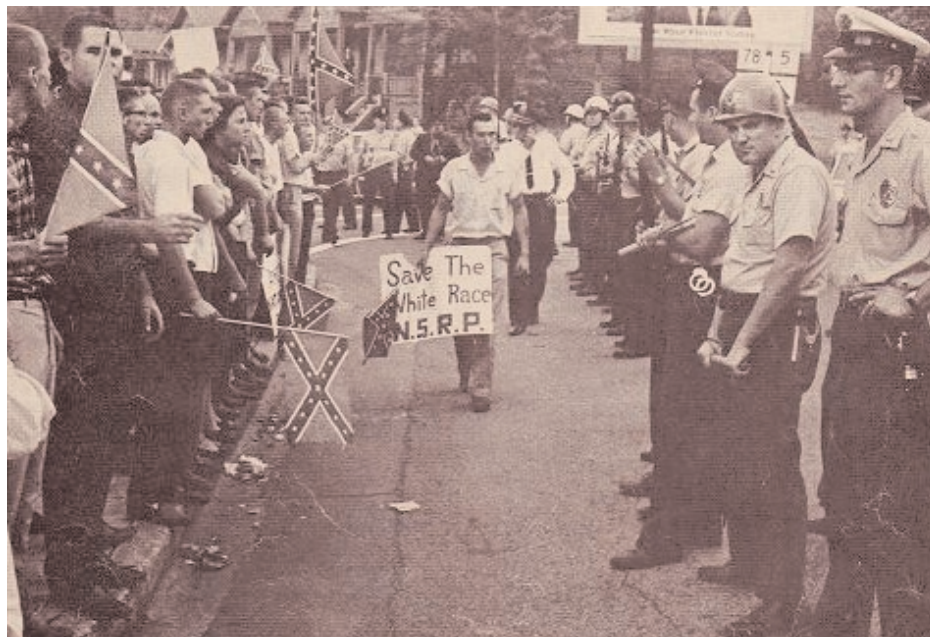
In arguing for separate communities, Malcolm X believed that African Americans should reassert their African culture. African Americans, he believed, had been taught to disassociate themselves from Africa.

*"We did not realize that in hating Africa and the Africans we were hating ourselves. You cannot hate the roots of a tree and not hate the tree itself."*

For Malcolm a favorable image of Africa was a source of strength for African Americans. Malcolm X bitterly criticized Martin Luther King for his views on passive resistance. In the face of increasing police sanctioned brutality towards peaceful civil rights demonstrators, Malcolm X argued unapologetically that African Americans have the moral and legal right to use violence to defend themselves against attacks from a white, racist society and should be prepared to do so.

*"It is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant*

*victim of brutal attacks. [...] The time has come for Afro-Americans to fight back in self-defense whenever and wherever he is being unjustly and unlawfully attacked. If the government thinks I'm wrong for say-*



*Members of the National States Rights Party and others making objections to integration.*

*ing this, then let the government start doing its job."* (Malcolm X Speaks, New York 1965 pp 18-22)

In a time when black people held the lowest jobs, were commonly referred to in derogatory terms, and could be lynched in the south for not properly addressing a white person, Malcolm X articulated his rage at the black condition in a manner unprecedented in American history. These speeches alarmed white America, disturbed their complacency, and exposed a chronic refusal of white Americans to acknowledge that there was a problem with the living conditions of black Americans.

In his speeches, Malcolm X often referred to white people as leeches, swine, dogs, devils and other beasts. While there are those who believe that this was evidence of his hatred, there are many others who

feel that Malcolm X was not racist but purposely using this rhetoric for a practical effect, as a way of urging African Americans to reject the servitude that until now had characterized black lives and their relationships with white people.

Under Malcolm X's leadership as

the spokesman for the Black Moslems, the Nation of Islam expanded rapidly from 400 members and 5 temples to 40,000 members and 69 temples. However, Malcolm's impact reached well beyond the

confines of the Black Moslems and their followers.

Beginning in the 1960s, Malcolm was invited to participate in numerous university lectures, debates, forums, radio stations and television programs. In 1963, the New York Times reported that Malcolm X was the second most sought after speaker in the United States. The first was the Republican Party nominee for President, Barry Goldwater. Despite all the publicity he courted, Malcolm X's views were not supported by the mainstream leaders and groups in the Civil Rights Movement. This was all to change in Alabama.

Alabama had a long history of hostility towards civil rights, particularly in Birmingham, the largest industrialized city in the South. That attitude was personified in Governor George Wallace, who in his inaugural speech that year exclaimed, "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" Civil rights leaders believed that if Birmingham could be broken then the rest of the nation would be easy. The non-violent campaign to desegregate Alabama began in April 1962.

After a year of sit-ins, boycotts and marches the Alabama campaign was no closer to achieving their goals. Martin Luther King and other leaders began to lose their prestige and influence among younger demonstrators who, frustrated by

the lack of progress, began to turn to Malcolm X for inspiration. His beliefs began to be openly discussed and debated among King's followers. Despite the growing popularity of Malcolm X and invitations to come to Birmingham, he was blocked from doing so by King and the other leaders of the campaign who feared that his presence and radicalism would only incite violence and lose the support of white sympathizers. Malcolm X was furious and instead began organizing a unity rally in Harlem, New York.

Although Malcolm X never took part in the activities of Birmingham, his influence was felt. In renewed efforts to desegregate Alabama, African Americans who were outraged by the behavior of the police began for the first time to riot and fight back with rocks and bottles. The turmoil of these demonstrations was captured by the media and plastered on the front pages of newspapers. Fearing a race war, the Birmingham riots led a reluctant President John F. Kennedy to intervene by sending in federal troops and asking congress to legislate new programs to help poor black Americans. For fear of alienating Southern white voters, however, businesses and state institutions would not be



*Sheriff Jim Clark of Selma, who has vowed to keep blacks from polls*

compelled by Kennedy's proposed laws to integrate or dismantle their discriminatory practices. This was seen by many to be a failure and the civil disobedience approach of Martin Luther King had proved to be largely ineffective in the face of determined white resistance. For the first time, even King admitted publicly that he harboured doubts about the potential of his own methods. King was not alone.

**Continued on next page...**



*Police in Alabama, breaking up a protest march*



# Fifty Years of Black Activism

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The Alabama images of bombed black churches, firemen spraying peaceful protesters with high-powered water cannons and police clubbing demonstrators and attacking marchers (including women and children) with police dogs, caused blacks all across America to turn their backs on the possibility that the white community could ever be serious about their efforts to integrate blacks. Malcolm X could no longer be ignored as a legitimate spokesperson for black America. After Birmingham, Malcolm X was embraced by major groups in the Civil Rights Movement including senior members of the Negro Association for the Advancement of Coloured Persons (NAACP), the radical black clergy, the student civil rights workers of the Student non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The Unity Rally organized by Malcolm X in June of 1963, was the one of the largest civil rights events in United States, sparking observers to comment that whites had better deal with Reverend King before they deal with Malcolm. Indeed, documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that the FBI and the CIA had an ongoing fear of Malcolm X as the actual or potential leader of a black America.

Concerned that Malcolm X's views were finding traction in the mainstream, it was rapidly becoming evident to Kennedy and the federal government that their policy of gradual integration was no longer acceptable to African Americans, and as many as 30 southern cities might explode in vio-



*Dorothy Counts, the first black student at Harding High School, North Carolina being harassed by students.*

lence. The choice was clear: either the United States could remove the incentive to mob action and voluntarily enact laws that would end segregation, or it would be forced to do so through a growing violent insurgency among the 21 million black people that inhabited the country.

On a televised address held on June 11, 1963, President Kennedy asked Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public--hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments. In meetings with civil rights

leaders following the address, Kennedy made it clear that the bill would only be passed if the confrontational elements in the movement would be toned down and isolated.

Although Kennedy would be assassinated before ever seeing this legislation passed

into law, his actions ensured that Martin Luther King and not Malcolm X would be the final heir of the Civil Rights Movement. In the years following Kennedy's death, Malcolm X separated from the Black Moslems, changed his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and toured Africa, visiting eleven heads of state and addressing most of their parliaments.

Upon his return to New York, Malcolm X announced the formation of the Organization of African Unity, which he saw as a broad-based coalition of black groups, progressive and radical white organizations, and newly independent African states organized to expose America's hypocrisy as a symbol of democracy and freedom by bringing black people's complaints before international bodies. Malcolm X also became the first leader of national prominence to come out against the war in Vietnam.

El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, better known as Malcom X, was assassinated on February 21, 1965 at the age of 40 at a political rally held in Harlem, New York. Declared dead on arrival at the hospital, the world had lost one of its most charismatic and powerful human rights advocates of the 20th century.

*by Adonis Huggins, Program Co-ordinator at the Regent Park Focus*

## What You Didn't Know About the X-Men

Most youth are familiar with the popular X-Men comic book series and recently released blockbuster movie. The X-Men is about a small population of people known as "mutants" who possess special powers such as the ability to read minds or project laser beams from their eyes. Each mutant's power is based on the genetic makeup of the individual. The mutants, with their superhero like powers, are treated by humans with suspicion and scorn. Thus the X-Men stories focus on how these "mutants" deal with the struggles of living in a world that refuses to acknowledge their humanity and perceives them as monsters.

Although the X-Men comic may look like a fantasy story, a closer glance reveals themes deeply rooted in American politics of the 1960's.

The X-Men comic books were created by Stanley Lee and Jack Kirby in 1963 during the civil rights era. Stanley and Jack wanted to make a comic book that reflected characters and themes that were current to their times. Two influential figures



*Lee and Kirby's legendary characters were based on real-life heroes*

of this period were Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, two black leaders of the civil rights movement. Both men had opposing views on how to solve the issue of racism.

Stanley and Jack decided to tackle this debate by creating characters that embodied the ideals of the two leaders and their concerns about racism. Martin Luther King Jr., characterized by Professor



Xavier (Professor X), is a mutant leader that strives for peaceful assimilation and coexistence between humans. Malcolm X is represented by Magneto, a mutant separatist who believes that mutants should live away from humans and accomplish their goals by "any means necessary." including violence.

Thus the problems of racism in America and the black struggle for equality were

converted into pages of fiction and used as a central backdrop in a comic book called the X-Men.

Can we conclude by all of this that the X-Men comics are a perfect depiction of what black struggles were like during the 1960's? While it is true that Stanley and Jack worked hard to put themselves in the minds of two black leaders, the X-Men is a fabricated world and differs significantly from the real experiences, views and struggles of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.



*da Flava's Tyrone MacLean-Wilson, 20*



# The Real “Real McCoy”



Elijah McCoy, the real McCoy

*"It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people... For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."*

--Nelson Mandela, "Long Walk to Freedom"

I have occasionally seen in Hamilton a big bus with the words "The Real McCoy" painted in large lettering across one entire side. For many years I, like some of you, used the expression "The Real McCoy" until I discovered that there was a real person who invented this expression.

McCoy was a black man whose real name was Elijah McCoy. He was born right

here in Ontario, in Colchester Township, not too far from Windsor. McCoy lived from 1844 to 1929. When he was 16, with the help of a family friend, Elijah went to Edinburgh, Scotland, to study electrical engineering. He returned to North America 5 years later, but because of racial prejudice was unable to find a job in the profession that was his childhood dream, that of a locomotive engineer. The only employment he could get was a labourer's job. He was hired by the Michigan Central Railroad to shovel coal and to oil the moving parts of the train. At that time, when locomotive engines needed oiling they had to be shut down temporarily to be lubricated by hand.

Realizing that this was a waste of time and money, McCoy spent two years developing a self-lubricating system, for which he received a patent in 1872. His invention was widely acclaimed by people in the locomotive business--it saved 7 minutes for every 100 miles of travel. Over the course of his lifetime, McCoy received over 50 patents for his inventions, most of them related to lubricating devices for heavy machinery. His lubricators were known as the "Real McCoy's," a term that has come to denote quality, not an imitation or substitute. Sadly, although his inventions brought prosperity to some and benefited many, he died unrecognized, in poverty.

McCoy is one of countless individuals of

African heritage in modern history whose genius--in spite of the hostile and repressive social environment in which he lived--has blossomed in many fields of human endeavour but whose "sweetness has been wasted on the desert air" (From Grey's *Elegy in a Country Courtyard*). These gems have been hidden away in forgotten caves, their sparkle stolen for others' benefit. How many McCoy's have not been given recognition and been banished from the history that our children learn in school? How much of the history and accomplishments of the African world is included in the academic curriculum of schools, colleges and universities?

That is why we had Black History Month. For me, Black History Month begins with a focus on issues of direct relevance and concern to people of African descent, but it places these concerns in the larger context of the society and world in which we live. We have an active role to play as contributors to local and global society. I would summarize that role as follows:

- Live with awareness of the wonderful diversity of our oneness (rejecting the monocultural consumer culture)
- Commitment to community service both at home (anti-racism, working with disenfranchised youth, anti-poverty, refugee support, etc.) and abroad
- Thoughtful and informed civic engagement and social analysis
- Ecological awareness (realizing that this

is a living planet of which we are the guardians, also learning about sustainability, reverence)

-Using spirituality as inspiration

I end with a special message to the young people--not original, but worth repeating:

-Know yourselves and be proud of your heritage. "Self-esteem is a pre-requisite for a happy and purposeful life. It is also a pre-requisite for developing compassion for others. You cannot take a stand and work for change if you don't feel good about yourself."

-Achieve the best you can at school for your own sakes, but also to put your skills at the service of others, to make the world a better place. We recognize that the "best" is not the same for all.

-Do not allow your aspirations to be limited. Harold Braithwaite was told in 1969 by his principal that should he get a graduate education, his accent would still prevent him from getting teaching job. He subsequently became Director of Education of a school board in southern Ontario.

I close as I began, echoing the words of Nelson Mandela: "...to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

by Dr. Gary Warner,  
McMaster University

## The History of African Liberation Month

McDonald's calls it Black History Month; Harbourfront Centre refers to it as African Heritage Month. The great Barbadian revolutionary and author of the book *The Name Negro: Its origin and Evil Use*, Richard B. Moore was clear on the issue of naming people and historical events. Moore always maintained that dogs and slaves are named by their masters; free people name themselves.

Where did the idea of Black History Month come from? Did it drop from the skies? No. Was it conceived in the lab of a mad African scientist? Wrong again. Personally, I'm tired of hearing uninformed people remark, "They give us the coldest and shortest month of the year to celebrate Black History Month."

First of all, they didn't "give" us anything. The masses of African people in the United States and Canada, the great African American historian Carter G. Woodson and his organization, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, were the ones who forced the system to recognize African people's contribution to the world. Woodson's organization came into existence only 30 years

after the Berlin Conference, where European colonial powers carved up Africa like a Thanksgiving turkey.

Why did Woodson pick February as the time to commemorate Africa's many gifts to humanity? John Henrik Clarke, author of *Africans At the Crossroads: Notes For An African World Revolution*, answers, "Black History Week comes each year about the second Sunday in February, the objective being to select the week that will include both February 12, the birth of Abraham Lincoln, and February 14, the date Frederick Douglas calculated to have been his natal day. Sometimes the celebrations can include one day, in which case Douglas' date gets preference."

February never was meant to be the only month in which African people reflected on their past. Clarke sates: "The aim is not to enter upon one week's study

of black people's place in history. Rather, the celebration should represent the culmination of a systematic study of black people throughout the year. Initially, the observance consisted of public exercises emphasizing the salient facts brought to light by researchers and publications of the association during the first 11 years of its existence. The observance

was widely supported among black Americans in schools, churches and clubs. Gradually, the movement found support among other groups and institutions in America and abroad."



Carter G. Woodson, often dubbed the "Father of Black History"

We've come a long way since Woodson created Negro History Week in 1926. Woodson's classic book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (the inspiration for the title of Lauryn Hill's *The Mis-Education of Lauryn Hill*), is a must-read for anyone who wants to be on the right side of history.

The time has come to update Woodson's idea as Abdul Akalimat, activist/scholar and author of *African American and Cyberspace* has pointed out, "Some of us have been promoting the notion that it was important to move from Negro to black, from week to month and now it is time to move from a general notion of history to then specific theme of black history which is liberation."

The question is, history for what? The answer is for liberation. Huge hamburger chains have appropriated images of the great kings and queens of Africa while holding up those who support the status quo in North America like colon and ccondosleezie. African people, like all people, have a right to determine who are their friends and who are their enemies.

by Norman "Otis" Richmond



# In Conversation With Hockey Expert Cecil Harris



**F**ew know that the first black NHL player, Willie O'Ree, played with only one eye. Even fewer know that the first hockey school in North America was created by a black gentleman named Herb Carnegie. Both these men were Canadian as well. Blacks have made great contributions to the sport. Catch *da Flava* commissioned Jahinder Dhoot to interview Cecil Harris, who wrote the book: "Breaking the Ice: The Black Experience in Hockey." He is the leading authority on the subject. Both young and old, athletic and non-athletic, black and non-black can enjoy this.

**da Flava:** There were numerous struggles that black hockey players had to go through. Have things gotten better?

**Harris:** Well it's definitely better for today's players than it was for Willie O'Ree, who was called every dirty name in the book--and names that he didn't even know existed. And the same for Mike Marson and Bill Riley. Marson and Riley tell me stories, and this happened in the 70s, basically just 3 decades ago: people throwing chicken bones at them, people throwing cotton balls at them, really racist chants from the crowd. You don't get that anymore--Anson Carter's never had to deal with that, Jarome Iginla, Mike Grier, today's black players in the NHL thank goodness don't have to deal with that. But what they do have to deal with is the isolated incident. In the 2002 Stanley Cup playoffs, Kevin Weekes, playing goal for Carolina in Montreal at the Molson Centre, somebody threw a banana at him. And in March 2003 Trevor Daley [was a] rising star and team captain of the Sault St. Marie Greyhounds in the OHL [...] But here's John Vanbiesbrouck as coach as GM saying to two of Trevor's team-mates, two of his white team-mates, using the "N" slur, just dissing Trevor Daley brutally, and doing it on several occasions. And the good thing about that though is the two team-mates didn't say, "Oh we've got to protect our coach, we can't tell Trevor what he said." They called Vanbiesbrouck out because they were offended by what he had done. And as a result of Trevor's

two teammates telling him what happened, and Trevor's agent advising him to leave the team until something is done [...] Vanbiesbrouck lost everything, lost the coach and GM job, lost his 25% stake in the team, and lost his reputation.

**da Flava:** Those players called out Vanbiesbrouck, but do you think a lot of those sorts of things are swept aside?

**Harris:** I think to the extreme of a coach and general manager using the "N" bomb--not to one of his players faces, but feeling secure enough to say it to the player's team-mates and nothing would happen--that is the kind of really sick isolated incident that really occurs. The league has policies in place now. Back in 1998 when Chris Simon was playing for the Capitals, he slurred Mike Grier, who was then with Edmonton. The league called him on the carpet. Simon was fined, he was suspended, and basically told to apologize face-to-face, man-to-man to Mike Grier. That's how it's dealt with today.

**da Flava:** Are there any players who understandably have a lot of bitterness and resentment about their experience in hockey?

**Harris:** Mike Marson admits that he does have some bitterness because he was expected to become the first black NHL star and he felt as though his career was sabotaged from the start--and in many ways it was. He was drafted by the Washington Capitals in 1974, and at the time [...] the NHL realized they were losing a lot of valuable young talent to the WHA so they dropped their draft eligibility to 18 just as Mike Marson was coming out. So if there was no WHA, Marson would have had the benefit of one additional year of junior hockey to get seasoning and experience. Instead he's thrown onto the worst team in the NHL, one of the worst teams in NHL history. Check the first 5 or 6 years of the Capitals--just brutal--something like 84 wins, 260 losses. Just ridiculous. And he was just thrown onto that team. [...] Marson never became the player he should have been [...] he is the only black player at the time, he's 18 playing with guys in their mid-to-late 20s and 30s, and he's a

bonus baby because of the bidding war between the WHA and NHL. The NHL essentially overpaid so he wouldn't go to the other league; they gave him a 5 year \$500,000 contract, and that's comparable to a kid getting a \$5 million contract today. Huge money for someone who was unproven. But Marson got that money because they wanted him in the NHL, but wasn't quite ready. So there's resentment from his teammates because he's making more than they are and they're established players and he's not, he's a black player and he's married to a white woman. So he sort of broke all of those unspoken taboos and he got heat from so many directions that he could never really focus on playing.

**da Flava:** Jarome Iginla is the first black player to captain an NHL team, score 50 goals, and win a scoring title. Do you think he's changed the perception of black



*Once the objects of discrimination, black hockey players and coaches are becoming increasingly influential figures in the sport*

hockey players?

**Harris:** I think he definitely has, especially in Canada. The problem is not enough people in the United States have seen him; 24 of the 30 franchises are based in the United States. [...] So here's Iginla, something of a mystery to people in America. Except for the Olympics that were carried on NBC, people in America still haven't seen a lot of Jarome Iginla. But I do know that in Canada his presence is heavily felt; he's a major presence in the sport and he's inspiring a lot of people.

**da Flava:** In 2003, Grant Fuhr was the first black inductee into the Hall of Fame, how significant is that for black hockey history?

**Harris:** Grant pointed out that he was really representing all the black players who came before him; he felt as though he was representing Willie O'Ree, the first

black player in the NHL in 1958; and represented people who preceded O'Ree like Herb Carnegie who should have been the first black NHL player in the 1940s. [...] It's just a source of pride because even the kids I talk to in New York in the Ice Hockey in Harlem program, they are too young to have seen Grant play for all those great Oilers teams in the 80s, but they know the name. He is someone they can point to now, they can say, "Well, if Grant Fuhr could make it to the Hockey Hall of Fame, maybe I can be an NHL goaltender too, maybe I can aspire to that." So he's really one of the Jackie Robinsons of hockey.

**da Flava:** One of the individuals mentioned in your book is former NHLer and now coach at the University of Toronto, Darren Lowe. What impact has he had?

**Harris:** He does an excellent job, two-time coach of the year in that Ontario University Athletics conference. He really is a pioneer in his own right because he played for the Canadian Olympic team in 1984, then played for the Pittsburgh Penguins, and after that made up his mind to get into coaching role model. He just knew that he wanted to be able to teach the game and pass on knowledge that he had, and knock on as many doors as he can and knock down some doors if he has to, to get into coaching. [Another influential figure was] Bryant McBride, who works out of the Boston, Massachusetts area. [...] Bryant McBride came into the NHL and basically created the NHL diversity task force that exists today and said, "I want Willie O'Ree to be the man who is the face of the diversity task force," the one who's working with the kids, the one who's basically spreading the gospel of hockey to areas where they didn't know anything about hockey. So thanks to a black executive Willie O'Ree got basically a second hockey career, sort of a renaissance. And now Bryant is the only black player agent in the NHL. So we now have player agents, black referees, black sportswriters, so it's just not on the ice, there's also some significant things being done to smooth things for the future people off the ice.



*da Flava's Jatinder Dhoot, 24*



# Ask da Sexpert

## The Increasing Value of Abstinence

*You make a decision every day...  
from the drive-thru at McDonald's to your  
sexual lifestyle.*

*If they ask you "Do you want fries with  
that?"*

*And you say "No," is that okay?*

*Of course it is!*

*And the same goes for sex.*

*Just because a lot of people say "Yes",*

*Who said that has to be your choice, too?*

Society is bombarded with sexual images, from tantalizing short skirts to low-slung jeans that tempt and tease. Sexuality oozes out of subways and streetcars into our malls, homes, schools and minds. With the fear of unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and parental hysteria, the term "safe sex" is equated with colorful and textured condoms, birth control pills like Alesse and Tri-Cyclen and the good ol' pulling out method! Little do young people know, however, the least-talked-about and most effective form of birth control does not cost \$5 a month at the clinic, nor does it cause you any embarrassment at the local Shoppers. This method is called abstinence. Not having sex is normal, safe, free and completely acceptable.

Choosing not to have sex can reveal the creative side of a relationship. It is not horrible, strange or weird to not want to have sex or stop for a period of time. Abstinence provides the freedom for you



*More and more teens are choosing to abstain to gain insight into themselves  
and their relationships*

to be in complete control of your body. The core values of abstinence are discipline, creativity and knowing yourself. After taking sex out of the equation, you can return to the happy place where the statement, "That guy approached you because you were a nice person," is positively true. Wouldn't that be great?

Remember that sexual expression does not have to mean intercourse. A relationship can flourish with creative and positive options and develop with meaningful

experiences with or without sexual intercourse. Through abstinence, you will see yourself as you really are, without the pressures to be that sex kitten or Don Juan.

Just as taking a daily pill at the exact same time every day might be hard to remember, or putting on that condom the exact right way is tricky, abstinence is definitely not easy! Many people are sex-obsessed and don't even know it. Keep track of how many times sex crosses your

mind on any given day and you may realize that you want to take up this challenge to achieve clarity, freedom and control of your thoughts and body. We are young and hormonal and given the opportunity, curiosity or habit will take over and clothes will start coming off. Abstain from sex and let your mind dictate.

Abstinence is not about depriving yourself of pleasure, but to provide yourself with the privilege of having a choice, gain unbelievable clarity, a fresh renewal of self-respect and the freedom to enjoy your lifestyle with the full understanding of your decisions.



*da Flava's Sexpert, Yvonne, 20*

**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*.**

## What do you wish to be?

*A juicy tenderloin steak  
or a priceless pearl in the ocean?  
When you are intimate with a male  
always remember that you have two  
choices to make...*

*The first choice:  
When lust becomes your priority...  
you can be a fresh and juicy tender-  
loin steak  
marinated and eaten any way he  
wishes  
savoring the best out of you.  
Once completely savored,  
the balance of what you are is out of  
sight*

*The second choice:  
When you prefer genuine love, under-  
standing, trust and deep compassion  
You resemble a priceless pearl  
deep below the ocean  
carefully protected within an encased  
shell*



*you remain unseen...and you are  
hard to find.  
Only the luckiest man  
who dives deep to the bottom of the  
ocean  
can reach out to you  
you are priceless....and you will be  
cherished forever...*

*So...*

*You make the wise choice  
Whether you wish to be a succulent  
tenderloin steak  
savored at the mercy of men  
who only temporarily want your  
looks...body and your youth  
and once they have got what they  
want...you are out of sight.*

*Or to be a priceless pearl  
for your man who has risked his life  
to reach you  
who treasures you for the rest of his  
life  
with never-ending intimate love  
until eternity.*

*Now...*

*Make your choice  
for this will be the choice of your life-  
time...*

*by Dheena Dhayala Naidu, Malasia*

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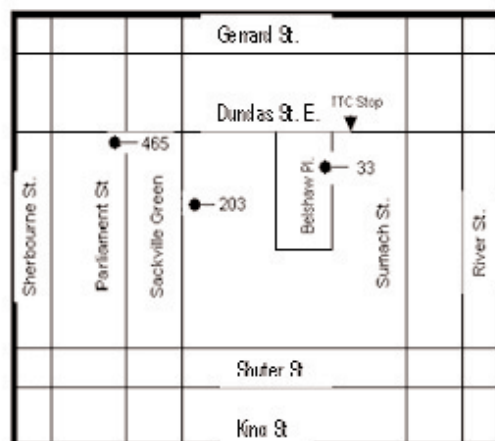
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গর্ভবতী পরিবারদের এবং ছয় বছরের নিচে  
সনতানদের জন্য আমরা বিনা মূল্যে কর্মসূচী  
প্রদান করি।

கம்பனிப் பெண்கள் முதல் ஆறு  
வயது வரையிலான பிள்ளைகளைக்  
கொண்ட குடும்பங்களுக்காக வழங்கப்படும்  
பலதரப்பட்ட இலவச நிகழ்ச்சிகள்.

我們為懷孕婦女的家庭和六歲以下的兒童  
提供免費的活動

Chúng tôi có chương trình cho gia đình  
phụ nữ có thai và trẻ em dưới sáu tuổi

Barnaamijyo bilaash ah oo loogu tala  
galey qoysaska uurka leh iyo caruurta  
ilaa iyo bjar ka ah.

Ofrecemos programas gratis para  
familias con niños hasta los 6 años edad.

#### Infant Hearing Program & Preschool Speech & Language

Have your baby's hearing tested or your  
preschool child's speech and language skills  
checked for free. If your child needs help  
we will arrange individual or group work with  
specialists.

#### Family Resource Centre

For parents with children newborn to six  
years of age. This program provides  
creative, fun and educational children's  
activities as well as parenting information  
and resources.

#### Pre and Post-Natal Groups

Women meet every Monday with nurses,  
nutritionists, and family visitors and are  
welcome to bring a partner or friend.  
Groups are fun and women receive a weekly  
\$10 food voucher. Support for breast  
feeding, health information and childcare are  
provided.

#### Early Years Social Work & Child and Family Advocacy

We provide short term counselling, crisis  
intervention and groups for parents,  
caregivers, and children up to six years of  
age. We also advocate, make referrals,  
and provide access to services that meet  
parents and children's needs.

#### Community Development Work

Our focus is on creating a healthy and safe  
community for everyone. We work with  
youth, adults, community groups and  
agencies on issues that affect our  
neighbourhood. Individual and group  
programs with high risk youth are part of  
this work.

#### Groups for Parents & Children

Parenting is the most rewarding and  
challenging job! Groups focus on  
children's developmental needs and  
behaviour at different ages. Groups for  
parents build on strengths and are  
practical and confidential. Childcare is  
provided. Pick up group descriptions, start  
dates and locations at our office.

#### Early Years Nurse

A part time Nurse is available to provide  
health care for children up to six years of  
age. Make sure your child gets their  
immunizations and regular check ups. The  
nurse is available at 33 Belshaw Place half a  
day a week on a drop in basis and will  
attend home visits with Family Visitors.

#### Family Home Visiting

For prenatal women and parents with  
children up to six years of age. This  
program provides in-home information and  
activities that promote healthy infant and  
child development. Parenting information,  
help with family issues and referrals to  
other services are provided.



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

Tune in to *Catch da Flava* Youth Radio on CKLN 88.1 FM  
every Tuesday @ 7:30 p.m.



# REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

## Young Filmmakers Debunk the Myths About Regent Park

**S**pike Lee, John Singleton and now...Regent Park Filmmakers Agazi Afewerki and Mohammed Shafique are making films about their neighbourhood.

Last summer, Agazi (17) and Mohammed (17) participated in the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Program and produced a documentary about Regent Park. The video was shown to a wide array of audiences across the city. *Catch da Flava* had an opportunity to talk to Agazi and Mohammed about their experiences in the program.

**da Flava:** How did you both get involved with Regent Park Focus?

**Mohammed:** I first heard about Focus through a friend who recommended the program. He said it would give me a lot of great opportunities to learn different stuff related to media. I was interested in video so I dropped by.

**Agazi:** Two years ago I was walking in Regent Park and some stranger approached me and started talking about this media program that was located right here in the community. I learned later that the youth was an outreach worker who was hired to promote the program to youth. I had a good time last year so I came back again.

**da Flava:** What interested you about the program?

**Agazi:** Film and video production.

**da Flava:** What kind of things did you learn in the program?

**Agazi:** We learned how to use a camera properly, how to story-board, how to edit; we met film directors, lots of stuff.

**da Flava:** What made you decide to produce a documentary on Regent Park?

**Mohammed:** As part of the program's course we were required to work in small production groups to create a public service announcement and a video documentary or video drama about some issue affecting our lives. Most people chose topics like AIDS, the high costs of rent



Agazi Afewerki (left), Mohammed Shafique (right) are two teens who are intent on discrediting the myths about Regent Park.

and homelessness. I didn't feel that those issues personally affected me and that those issues are really hard to change in general. So I wanted to choose a topic on an issue that could be changed that I felt personally attached to.

**da Flava:** So you produced a video called the *Myths About Regent Park*. What is the video about?

**Agazi:** It's about people's perception of areas. People have a lot of stereotypes about different areas and we were trying to explore these stereotypes in our video.

**da Flava:** What was the most challenging thing about making the video?

**Agazi:** Nobody but the elderly wanted to be interviewed.

**Mohammed:** We did get a great interview with Bill Graham but when we came back to edit there was no sound. Just goes to show you that you can't trust technology. Of course it would have helped if we remembered to attach the mike cables to the camera (laughter).

**da Flava:** What do you hope people will take away from your video?

**Agazi:** Don't judge a book by its cover.

**Mohammed:** Yeah. The media has always portrayed Regent Park as a crime-infested area where people do a lot of drugs and get involved in prostitution. That's not true.

**Agazi:** Media likes to focus just on the negative.

**Mohammed:** The other thing about the video is that it compares Regent Park to higher-income communities like Rosedale and Forest Hill.

**da Flava:** So what did you learn?

**Mohammed:** We learned that most neighbourhoods have the same basic elements. There are positives and there are negatives. No community is perfect. Regent Park has a strong community. Same with the others.

**da Flava:** How would you like to see the video used?

**Agazi:** I would like to see it used as a tool to talk about stereotypes and how they affect people.

**da Flava:** The video you made was presented at the Regent Park Film Festival and several youth-focused conferences. The video has also shown widely to audiences at U of T, York University, Ryerson University and George Brown College. I estimate that over 2000 people have seen the video. Are you surprised at the reach it was having?

**Mohammed:** I really didn't expect a video to go that far.

**Agazi:** I don't think it would have gone far without the help of Regent Park Focus. So I really have to thank them.

**da Flava:** What are your future plans in terms of videography?

**Agazi:** I intend to attend Regent Park Focus again this summer because it is a great program with amazing staff and support. I recommend it to any youth who is interested in video production. Regent Park Focus has also inspired me to go into filmmaking. I am applying for the film program at York University. That's how much it means to me.

**Mohammed:** I like to go into business to make millions of dollars (laughter) and contribute to my community after I become rich.

**da Flava:** Good luck to you both.

### Regent Park Focus Media Arts Centre

#### Diva Girls' Club

Come join us for fun activities, discussions, movies and food! Mondays 4-6:30pm for girls 12-15 years old!

#### Catch da Flava Youth Radio

Tune in to Catch da Flava Radio every Tuesday at 7:30pm on CKLN 88.1 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 (600 Dundas St. E, rear basement) on Tuesdays at 6pm.

#### Journalists Wanted

Submit your poetry, opinion pieces and articles to Catch da Flava newspaper by sending them to [catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com)

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

#### Free Yoga Classes

Wednesdays 5:30-7:30pm (all)  
Fridays 1 pm-3pm  
(women only)  
at Regent Park Focus

#### DJing and Breakdancing Workshops

Learn how to spin, scratch and mix with DJGrouch, and groove with B-Girl Nylda Gilardo every Thursday evening from 6pm-8pm at 600 Dundas St. E. These workshops are FREE to youth ages 12-24! Call 416-863-1074 for more information.

#### New Photography Workshop

Learn to take digital pictures and develop black and white photographs every Saturday afternoon. To register, call 416-863-1074

REGENT PARK FOCUS IS LOCATED AT:  
600 DUNDAS ST. EAST  
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5A 2B9  
(ENTRANCE IS AT REAR BASEMENT)  
TEL: (416) 863-1074  
FAX: (416) 863-9440

**MEDIA, RACE AND POVERTY AND THEIR CONNECTION TO MYTHS ABOUT REGENT PARK**  
Community video screening and panel discussion featuring the youth-produced video "The Myths About Regent Park." Tuesday April 26th, 2005 from 6:30-8:00pm at Regent Park Focus.