

# Catch da Flava

May/June 2005

www.catchdaflava.com

Volume 10 Issue 3

Youth and Student Newspaper Produced by the Regent Park Focus

## Reflecting on Asian Heritage Month



*Have you ever seen this in your history book? These are three Japanese boys at a North American internment camp during WWII. Asian people have had a rich history in Canada, and learning about it is the aim of Asian Heritage Month which takes place during May.*

### Asian Heritage Month: Just another meaningless celebration?

What comes to mind when you think of May? If you are like most students you think of sunshine, exams and hunting for a summer job. Chances are, however, that Asian Heritage Month does not come to mind.

Asian Heritage Month has been celebrated in Canada during the month of May since 1993. Officially, however, Asian Heritage Month was enacted through a declaration by the Canadian Senate in December 2001. The objective of Asian Heritage Month is to make the country aware of the history and culture of Asian Canadians and their contributions to Canadian culture.

I am half Chinese and until recently I never heard of Asian Heritage Month. Similarly none of my friends--whether they are Chinese, Japanese or Indian--know that Asian Heritage Month even exists. With almost 1.5 million Asians in the GTA alone, why is there so little publicity regarding the celebration? I have celebrated Valentine's Day, Easter Sunday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Black History Month, Victoria Day and countless other holidays. It seems strange to me that the month-long celebration of my own heritage is barely publicly recognized. For instance, there are no commercials on television, no advertisements on the radio and little acknowledgement in public schools.

In addition to the lack of public awareness about Asian history is the challenge of helping Canadians understand that the various ethnic peoples that make up Asia are very distinct from each other. They also have different cultural identities and historical experiences. Given that Asian Heritage Month is a celebration of every Asian culture, how effective can this celebration be in teaching Canadians about the distinct cultural contributions and experiences of Asian Canadians?

For example will Asian Heritage Month create greater awareness of the role the Chinese played to build the Canadian Pacific and Transcontinental railroads? This was no small feat when you consider that the railway unified Canada and became the driving backbone of the early North American economy. Yet compared to their white colleagues, the Chinese railway workers were horribly underpaid and were sacrificed when explosives needed to be planted in treacherous landscapes. Many believe that a Chinese person died for every mile of railway track that was built.



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looking European**

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dress too sexily?**

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## POET'S CORNER

### FOR YOU MY SON

As I held you  
In my Arms Today  
And felt your breath  
So near  
I Knew right at that  
Moment, how much you  
Really care  
I held on to you tightly  
Nor wanting to let go  
I had a funny feeling  
For what I did not know  
The birds, they were singing  
And flying high above  
It seemed as though, the songs  
They sang  
Were for a mother's love  
As I say good-bye to you  
Today, my heart fills up  
With pride  
For I am standing strong  
And tall, with friends  
And family at my side  
And I'll cherish every  
Moment, that we have  
shared today  
I'll hold on to your  
Memory, so they won't  
Fade away.

Love, Mother

Joyce, June 2001

## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

*Catch da Flava* is a student and community youth newspaper that is published bi-monthly. 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 or submit directly to mail@catchdaflava.com

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# Editorial

## Asian Heritage Month: Who is it for?

For all of you who didn't know, May is Asian Heritage Month. I wasn't even aware that such a celebration existed until a few weeks ago--and I'm Chinese. The reason Asian Heritage Month is so obscure--even to Asians--might be because Asian people played a relatively small role in its creation. What's worse, its existence is an insult to the very people it is meant to commemorate. Let me explain.

Asian Heritage Month (which is NOT the same as South Asian History Month, which also takes place during May) was probably inspired by Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which was designated as a month-long celebration by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. May was chosen to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrant in the US on May 7, 1843, as well as the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869 which was built primarily by Chinese workers. (Of course they didn't mention that Canada and the States interned the Japanese during WWII (meaning the government took away all their possessions, separated families, and forced Japanese people to live in squalid work camps) or that North America terribly exploited the Chinese workers that came to build the railroad.) In any case, Canada followed suit about a decade later when the Senate of Canada passed a motion in 2001 to dedicate May as Asian Heritage Month.

What's "special" about Asian Heritage Month is that it recognizes the contribution

of ALL Asians throughout Canadian history. All, meaning that whether you are from Bangladesh, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, China, the Philippines, Korea or any other designated "Asian" country, your "heritage" gets lumped together and homogenized even though all those cultures have nothing in common, other than the fact that immigrants from those nations all faced extreme racism when they first landed in North America. The lack of distinction between those cultures and countries (which don't even all share the same land mass) is subtle proof of the ignorance and prejudice of those who decided to treat them all as one unit. Given the choice, no Asian person would want their heritage celebrated with that of dozens of other unrelated countries (imagine having a European Heritage Month and what little justice it would do to the Italians, Portuguese, Greeks, Spanish and French, each of whom have unique cultural identities).

Even though I strongly support the celebration of the diverse cultures in Canada, I do not support celebrating them all at once. This, however, is the best that the government has to offer so far. As insulting as it is, perhaps the more people learn about Asian Heritage Month, the more they will try to improve it--possibly by eradicating and replacing it with more appropriate celebrations. Thus, the Asian Heritage Month issue of *Catch da Flava* is born. Enjoy.

by Bo Wen Chan, 21,  
University of Toronto



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# Welcome Bill Blair, Toronto's New Police Chief

There is a new sheriff in town, and he is crazy about community policing! The former unit commander of 51 Division has become Toronto's new police chief. Bill Blair, 51, is the youngest person ever to hold the post. The announcement was made by Toronto Police Service Board Chair and Ward 15 Councillor, Pam McConnell, after a 6-week coast-to-coast search for the right candidate. McConnell, whose district includes Regent Park, cites Blair's "approachability, impressive experience, and commitment to community outreach" as the main reasons for his hiring.

Julian Fantino, the former Chief, also speaks warmly of Blair. "He comes from a family of police officers. His dad was just a very, very fine police officer. [...] [He] brings a lot of credentials to the job. He's great at the technical aspect of the work. He has great interpersonal skills and I'm very, very pleased that he was appointed..."

William Sterling Blair has almost 30 years of law enforcement experience, starting as a security guard at Fairview Mall. He joined the Toronto Police Force in 1974 as a constable on foot patrol duties at Regent Park. He progressed quickly to drug enforcement, including work as an undercover officer. Later, he held command at many administrative posts in the Toronto Police Services (TPS) including community policing, corporate communications, detective support, and his last post as Interim Deputy Chief.

In addition to his experience, Blair has a stellar academic background. He is the first Toronto Police Chief with a degree in Criminology (University of Toronto 1981). He went on to the acclaimed FBI

Academy in 1990. Recently he received a certificate from Police Leadership Program from Rotman School of Business -- a mini-MBA program designed for police commanders. Chief Blair teaches regularly at University of Toronto and Seneca College.

Blair originally came to the media's attention in 1995 when he volunteered to head the then-troubled 51 Division. Many considered the move to be career suicide. Dissent within the rank-and-file was high. His predecessor, Ed Hegney, was transferred out and charged under the Police Services Act after a wildcat strike in the division.

The January 26 strike started when two 51 officers ordered two black men at gunpoint to get out of their car on Dundas St. E. in a "high-risk takedown." The men were forced to the ground and handcuffed. They were not charged, and later released. One of the men was Dwight Drummond, then a CITY-TV assignment editor. The two officers were brought before the Board of Inquiry. Dissenting officers protested and brought about the first strike in TPS history.

Other problems had also plagued the division. Stuart Mitchell, a homeless man died under police custody at 51 Division. The official report states that death occurred as a result of a drug overdose. Many in the community, however, suspected foul play. Another homeless man, Thomas Kerr, alleged that nine 51 Division officers secretly took him to Cherry Beach and assaulted him. The case was settled out of court.



A second officer protest took place in August 1995 over the transfer of the former 51 commander, Ed Hegney. In the same month, an altercation with Regent Park residents resulted in eight injured officers and three arrests. Nearly 50 cruisers and 100 officers were on scene. Residents alleged that by-standers, including children, were pepper-sprayed.

Blair acted quickly. He reassured community leaders after the debacle and opened new avenues of dialogue. Officers with a history of attitude problems were replaced by those who shared Blair's optimism for change.

Publicly, Blair championed the new progressive idea of "community policing" as

a solution to the problem of transient drug dealers in Regent Park. Touted as a return to "old-style" policing, officers were taken out of cruisers. Patrols were done either by bike or on foot. Greater co-operation with the community was seen as the only effective way to make the streets safe.

For his efforts at 51 Division, Blair was given ample praise by area residents, reporters, and officers. With encouragement from the Toronto Star, Blair became one of the nominees in 1999 for the position of Police Chief. When Julian Fantino was hired instead, many progressives felt a sense of loss. NOW reporter Scott Anderson wrote that one of the biggest disappointments of 1999 was that "superintendent Bill Blair was passed over for police chief. He's young, tough, smart, talented. He's committed to community policing. Therefore, he is too good to be chief."

Blair's ascension to the top job came after weeks of speculation. Interim-Chief Mike Boyd was thought to be the frontrunner and many in the media alleged that he was the Mayor's choice. Boyd came out of retirement to serve after the Toronto Services Board decided not to renew the contract for Julian Fantino. Boyd had hoped to make his interim position permanent.

Boyd strongly endorsed Blair after the announcement. "I want to be able to tell all of the members of the service how fortunate they are and I want to be able to convey to the community how confident they can be in Chief William Blair's leadership because he is a great police leader." Blair will doubtless prove Boyd right in the upcoming years.

by da Flava's Sammy Lao, 24

## Your Questions About the Regent Park Redevelopment

Welcome to "Your Questions About the Regent Park Redevelopment." As you are aware, Regent Park is scheduled to begin redevelopment in 2006. Residents in the first phase of the redevelopment are required to make relocation arrangements by October 18th, 2005. Tenants can relocate to other vacant units in Regent Park if they chose. In response to resident queries, Catch da Flava has created a new section to publicly answer some of your questions and concerns about the revitalization. If you have any, we will dialogue with TCHC to ensure that your questions are answered.

**Q:** Will TCHC pay residents for disconnecting and reconnecting resident utilities/services like phone, cable, hydro and internet services? What about residents who because of credit problems or lack of acceptable ID are not able to set

up an account with hydro and/or other utility/service providers?

**A:** TCHC will cover the costs of disconnecting and reconnecting services such as the phone, cable, Internet, hydro and mail forwarding. Tenants who are not able to setup an account with utility providers should contact the Relocation Office. We may be able to provide assistance in communicating with the utilities.

**Q:** Who will pay the costs/fees related to redirecting mail during the entire time of the relocation process and again when residents return?

**A:** TCHC will cover the costs of mail forwarding for six months. During that time, tenants are expected to provide their contacts with their new address information. At the time of return, if a tenant chooses to return, TCHC will cover the costs of

mail forwarding for six months.

**Q:** What about residents whose families currently pay for TCHC parking and then move to another location where the monthly parking fee is higher and/or there are no parking spaces available? Who will pay these extra parking costs?

**A:** Different units have different utilities. Some have dishwashers, some have cable, some have other services such as parking. The utility fee is based on the utilities that come with the unit. If the utilities in the relocation unit are different from the ones that a household currently has, the utility fee will change a small amount to cover the increase or decrease in utilities you get. So in some areas parking fees may be higher and in other areas the parking fees may be lower. Tenants can ask the Relocation Office these details before they accept a unit. They can also ask about the

availability of parking spaces.

**Q:** If residents do not pick one of the unit choices offered because it is not (in their eyes) appropriate to their housing/family needs, what happens?

**A:** The Relocation Office will try to come as close as possible to meet a household's relocation preferences. Under the Tenant Agreement, households have the option to stay within Regent Park. If a household has mobility issues, we would also want to ensure that they were offered appropriate units (i.e. elevators, ground floors).

Special thanks to Jennifer Cargnelli, Relocation Manager (TCHC) for answering our questions. You can reach her at (416) 981-6737. Or, if you have questions that you would like us to ask TCHC on your behalf, email us at: [catchmail@catchdaflava.com](mailto:catchmail@catchdaflava.com)



# The CBC Culture Clash: Are We Canadian Or Chinese?

Whenever Chinese New Year comes and passes, I can't help but wonder what it's all supposed to mean to me. I know that there are celebrations at the malls in Chinatown, that it's the Year of the Rooster, that people buy peach blossoms and exchange lucky red envelopes. The occasion is no more and no less significant to me than the regular New Year. Does this mean that I've renounced my heritage? How do I reconcile my looks with the culture in which I was born and raised?

I'm sure you have realised by now that I am one of the growing number of Canadian-born Chinese (CBCs) in Canada: technically Canadian, ethnically Chinese, and culturally confused. I can admit that my English surpasses that of many Caucasians, that I'm ten times more fluent in French than in Chinese, and that I'm not all that ashamed of these facts. After all, I have the whole Asian community to be ashamed for me. They've coined many derogatory terms for people like me: banana, *juk sing* ("hollow bamboo"), whitewashed...I'm sure there are more but I'm not in tune enough with the Oriental community to know the latest insults. I think I voice the secret opinion of most CBCs when I say that I'm tired of being treated like the algebraic sum of two cultures. What I mean is that being a Canadian-born Chinese does not mean that you are Chinese + Canadian, give or take a bit



*The CBC: technically Canadian, ethnically Chinese and culturally confused?*

of each culture; it means that you belong to a group with unique attributes that cannot be determined by merely combining two heritages.

People often don't even realize it when they treat CBCs like dichotomous beings. They show it when, upon learning that you were born in North America, they ask presumptuous questions like, "Do you speak Chinese?" "How long did it take you to learn English?" "Do you know [insert fact in question here] about China?" "Are your eyes round because you were born in Canada?" "Can you cook all those cool Asian dishes?"

And then they become all disappointed when--or worse, sneer at you--when you tell them that you can cook quiche but not spring rolls, can quote Shakespeare but can't decipher the Chinese newspaper, or spent 6 years in ballet but don't know kung fu. If I came across an Italian or French person who spoke fluent Canadian English, I would never think to ask them about the details of pizza or wine-making, or expect them to know the political situations in Italy or France. It would be great if they did speak their ancestral tongues or were savvy about global issues, but I would never expect it of them. Most peo-

ple would never even get as far as asking them what their heritage is and just assume that they are generic "white" Canadians. So why the double standard, just because I look different?

I do not resent the fact that I am not Caucasian--in fact I like and appreciate the fact that I am Chinese. I took Saturday language classes in high school, I cook fried rice and red bean soup, I keep track of when the Harvest Moon will appear, and plan to send my future kids to Chinese classes. But I also want to write English novels, bake shortbread, celebrate Christmas and have my future kids enrolled in French Immersion. I, like every other CBC in the world, have unique talents and interests that cannot be predicted based solely on the combination of the major proponents of Canadian and Chinese cultures. What I know and like is as mysterious as the likes and experiences of the next white, black, East Indian, aboriginal or Asian person. Just because I look Oriental and think and speak in English, it does not mean anything, or tell you anything; it just shows that I am both and neither Canadian and/or Chinese. The moral of the CBC experience is the same hackneyed moral that's been propagated in elementary schools for decades: don't judge a book by its cover.

*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 21,  
University of Toronto*

*When the British built the railway in India, my great-great-grandfather applied, got educated, and became the first Indian train engineer. To celebrate this, the railroad managers gave him a gold watch and legally changed his name to Driver. They changed all his children's names and all of his brother's children's names to Driver. Ever since then, all of his descendants are Drivers. That was almost a hundred-and-fifty years ago. The watch is long gone now and we don't remember anymore the real name of our family.*

*-Edmund Driver*

## Regent Park Asian Heritage Month Celebration



Come with your friends and family to enjoy a wonderful evening full with activities and live performances!!

**WHEN:** Friday May 27, 2005

**WHERE:** North Regent Park Baseball Field (in front of 415 Gerrard)

**TIME:** 2:00-9:00 p.m

**PROGRAMME:**  
2-4 Tai Chi, Chinese games, bhangra, calligraphy and sari workshops,  
4-6 Storytelling, food, music,  
6-9 Bengali fashion show, Tamil dance, Vietnamese clothing showcase, movies.



*Assisted by the Regent Park Resident Council, Imprint!, CRC, Toronto Community Housing, Dixon Hall, Regent Park Community Centre, Regent Park Focus, Parents for Better Beginnings, SEAS, Nelson Mandela Park School, Regent Park Film Festival.*



# Teacher Knows Best

## Diversity Dream

There was a time in Canada when students of different cultures and religions were not allowed to go to the same schools. We've come a long way from segregated schools, but the road to a discrimination-free school system is still pretty long.

If you go to a Toronto District School Board school, the rights of all students and staff are protected by an "equity policy". The equity policy is set out to protect people from discrimination. Here's a quiz that will let you know how aware you are about different forms of discrimination.

### DISCRIMINATION QUIZ

Match these statements with each type of discrimination.

1. Why does she wear that scarf-thingy? Ha, I would never cover up my head like that...
2. Check out his squeeze pants. He's so gay!
3. All girls suck at football and boys don't use skipping ropes.
4. Teenagers steal--it's just the way they are.
5. [Insert ethnic group] students aren't good at school; they just get in trouble all the time.
6. There's no way she's going on the trip, her parents can't even give her money for lunch.

The above statements match discrimination based on these categories:

- a) Gender b) Sexual orientation c) Age  
d) Race e) Socio-economic status  
f) Religion

Answers:

1. f), 2. b), 3. a), 4. c), 5. d), 6. e)

Check your score:

#### 6 correct answers - Equity Guru

You know your stuff (unless you made 6 lucky guesses--then you need to go to 0 correct). You should be proud and take it one step further: don't allow people around you to discriminate. Say it loud and say it proud my peeps!

#### 4 or 5 correct - Comin' Round

You have some awareness and need to look into the answers you got wrong. Discrimination is everyone's problem. Keep on truckin' dawg!

#### 1 to 3 correct - Do not pass "GO", Do not collect \$200.00

You have a very limited understanding of the different forms of discrimination. You are not exactly a Neanderthal, but dangerously close. Talk to your friends and family about your condition and get help ASAP.

#### 0 correct - Are you living on planet earth?

You need to check yourself quick. If you don't know about these forms of discrimination, you have a very high probability of often harming others because you are ignorant (lacking knowledge) about this essential topic. Get your head out of your back side and do some homework.

The statements in the quiz are "in your face types" of discrimination. They are easy to identify. It is easy to understand why hearing one of those statements

Think about the reading material at your school library. Do you have a section in your library or books in the classroom that are written by or about people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?

Examples of "NO" responses:

-I have never seen books at my school written by or about stories of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

-There is one teacher at my school who has a couple books like that.

Systemic discrimination is about leaving



would hurt if it were directed at you.

#### SYSTEMATIC DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination at school is not as cut and dry as hearing comments in the hallway or put-downs in the playground. Discrimination is about power and is a very sneaky devil indeed. Systemic discrimination is not easy to understand but has much to do with exclusion. If you can get your head around this idea, it's about "what does NOT happen." Here are some things to think about: *Think about the students and the teachers and the office staff in your school. Do the students and the staff reflect the same degree of diversity?*

Examples of "NO" responses:

-The students are mainly from places like South Asia (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India) and the West Indies (Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana), and none of the office staff and 1 of the teachers is from a country outside of Canada.

-All the teachers in my school except 2 are female.

people out and not fully representing people. As a student do you know about Canadians who represent a diverse background of places and experiences?

### DIVERSITY QUIZ

Can you match the names of these Canadians with their claim to fame (below)?

1. Shyam Selvadurai
2. Marie Joseph Angelique
3. Faith Nolan
4. David Only
5. Tom Longboat

a) She was a slave in Montreal in 1734. She was going to be sold and in resistance she set fire to her owner's house. Several months later, she was captured. She was tortured, paraded through the streets, hung, and her body was burned.

b) She was born in Nova Scotia and is of African, Miqmaq and Irish heritage. She is a lesbian musician and an activist against sexism, homophobia, classism and racism.

c) He is the first on-air television personality with a visible disability (he was

partially paralysed by polio as a child). He joined CityTV in 1984 and is now the science and technology specialist and is an anchor for Pulse24.

d) He was born in Sri Lanka in 1965 and moved to Canada in when he was 19. His novel "Funny Boy" won the Lambda Literary Foundation's Award for Best Gay Male Novel as well as the Smith-Books/Books in Canada First Novel Award in 1994.

f) He was born in 1887 on the Onondaga Six Nations Grand River Reserve. In 1907, he won the Boston Marathon, running a distance of approximately 40 kilometres in record time. In 1909, he won the world professional marathon championships at Madison Square Gardens in New York City.

Answers:

1. d) 2. a) 3. b) 4. c) 5. f)

We all have lots to learn about diversity in Canada, and making our schools represent all students is a great place to start. If you have the notion to get busy and start prodding you teachers and principals about making your school truly inclusive, why not try some of these initiatives on for size?

-Invite community members who represent the diversity in your neighbourhood to share their life experiences with students at the school

-Tell your principal you would like to have student representatives present during the hiring interviews for new teachers at the school

-Have a Rainbow Day to celebrate the achievements of people who face homophobia and have demonstrated courage against this despicable type of discrimination. (Read stories, make posters, invite a guest speaker, watch educational videos like "Sticks and Stones" etc.)

-Organize a school field trip to a variety of places of worship in your community like a Hindu temple, a Muslim mosque, a Christian church and a Jewish synagogue.

The goal of school is for all students to feel safe from discrimination of any kind and to have the opportunity to reach personal, social and academic success. What are you going to do to make this "Diversity Dream" come true? Don't just stand there looking dazed sonny, help me dust off my Bob Marley record collection. Sing it now, "One love, one heart, let's get together and feel alright..."

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



# Asian Heritage Month

*...continued from cover*

When the railway was completed, rather than celebrate these laborers as heroes, the Chinese workers were neglected by the country they helped to create. While



*Chinese workers laying tracks on the Canadian Pacific Railway*

European settlers were pouring in by the thousands with the promises of free land, Chinese migrants were not allowed to



*Minto City camp, one of the many internment camps in Canada during WWII*

vote or sponsor their families. In fact, for 40 years, the Canadian government imposed such a hefty head tax for Chinese immigrants that it was dubbed the Chinese Exclusion Act, and from 1923 to 1947 less than 50 Chinese people entered

Canada. Comparably, from 1881 to 1884, 15,000 Chinese workers were recruited to come to Canada to help build the railway.

Will Asian Heritage Month acknowledge the hardships that these workers encountered and the lives that were lost?

Will Asian Heritage Month commemorate the experiences of Canadians of Japanese descent? In World War II in response to the Allied war with Japan, Canadian and American governments took away the rights and possessions of citizens of Japanese descent and forced them to live in intern-

ment camps. To add insult to injury, most of the victims were Nisei--second-generation Japanese who were born and raised here, and spoke little Japanese. Regardless, the government treated all Japanese people as enemies in their own country and locked them away without trial. The conditions of the camps were atrocious: many lacked insulation and there were no schools until several churches intervened. Some Japanese were even deported (what the government called "voluntary repatriation") after the war. The Japanese Internment has had lasting effects on the cultural make-up of this country: To this day, you will rarely ever encounter a "Japan-town" (compared to Little India or Chinatown) because the Japanese have learnt that segregating themselves in urban quarters makes them a target for discrimination.

In most public schools there is little mention in the history textbooks of Asian Canadian history despite how important Asian -Canadian people have been to the cultural and economic growth of Canada. Asian Heritage Month, therefore, can play an important role in helping the general population to understand and learn about the specific histories and experiences of Asian North Americans. For this to happen successfully we must recognize that "Asians" is a term that encompasses a diverse group of people, every faction of which has a distinct heritage.

Toronto is the most culturally diverse city in the world. With people of Asian decent comprising almost half of the population, I and many other Asian-Canadians would like to see more recognition of our contributions to Canada. Specifically, I think there should be television commercials



*Japanese riding in a train to an internment camp.*

recognizing our history as well as major media coverage of events in Asian communities. If there is going to be an Asian Heritage Month, get it right! Don't group us all into one category, don't give token teleprompter statements to address Asian Heritage Month and most of all, give Asian Heritage Month the media coverage it deserves so that Torontonians know about it!

*If you are interested in learning more about Asian Heritage Month, go visit the government's official website at: [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/asian-asiatique/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/asian-asiatique/index_e.cfm)*



*by da Flava's Aran Lee, 21*

## South Asian History Month

### What is South Asian Heritage Month?

South Asian Heritage month was proclaimed in the province of Ontario in 1999, implemented by the leadership of MPP Raminder Gill. Now mandated by the City of Toronto and coinciding with the federally proclaimed Asian Heritage Month, the month of May in the City of Toronto is an opportunity to recognize and discuss the history of South Asian communities.

### Who is South Asian?

South Asian refers to having ancestry through one or both parents in the area of



the world where countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet are located. South Asians also refers to peo-

ple with South Asian ancestry who live (or lived) outside of South Asia, for example, in the Caribbean, Africa, South East Asia, North & South America, Europe or anywhere else in the world.

Many question how we define a South Asian. There are two perspectives to consider: one is that South Asian is a "made-in-Canada identity, it is only upon arrival that South Asians see themselves as South Asians, or are told that this is how they will be labeled.

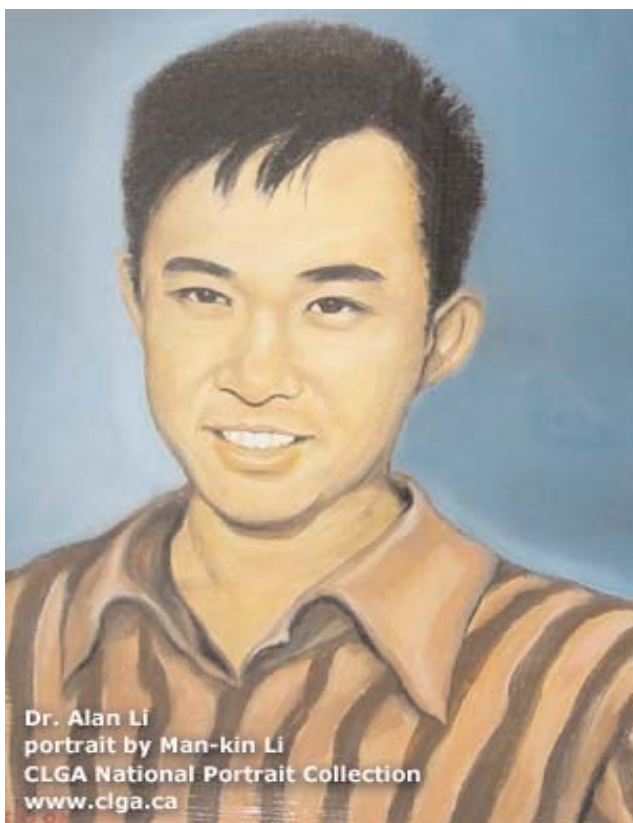
The other is that being South Asian is an overlapping identity and not a homogeneous label. This identity is then situational and relation specific, for example, a person will call herself South Asian when relating with a white Canadian but call herself Punjabi when relating with a Bengali person.

*Catch da Flava hopes that everybody has a memorable and meaningful South Asian History Month!*

*Reprinted from the Chillin' In Your Brown Skin Collective brochure.*



# In Conversation With Dr. Alan Li



Dr. Alan Li  
portrait by Man-kin Li  
CLGA National Portrait Collection  
www.clga.ca

**D**r. Alan Li practices at the Regent Park Community Center. He was the former medical director of Casey's House, a palliative care hospice for people with AIDS. An activist since the 1980's, Dr. Li was the first openly gay president of the Chinese Canadian National Council, a national organization for the promotion of human rights. Catch da Flava's Sam Lao recently had a chance to interview Dr. Li about the issues that concern him.

**da Flava:** What do you think of the state of the Chinese community today?

**Dr. Li:** The Chinese community has done very well economically and artistically. Socially and politically there is still a gap. We're disproportionately underrepresented. It doesn't have the same influence as its population size.

**da Flava:** Why is that?

**Dr. Li:** For a lot of reasons. Many of our older generations had to endure a lot because there is a long history of exclusion and discrimination. It ties in to the Head Tax and Chinese Exclusion Act, despite the fact that Chinese people helped build the Trans-Canada Railway. A lot of white people wouldn't do it because it was too dangerous and doesn't pay enough. Chinese people were brought over and when the railroad was finished they were denied entry, denied citizenship status, denied the opportunity to sponsor family.

At first [the government] imposed a Head Tax. When they found that it didn't stop Chinese immigration totally, they passed

the Immigration Exclusion Act, which is really a Chinese Exclusion Act since it explicitly prohibited people of Chinese descent from entering Canada. This was 1923-1947. During those times, all those Chinese men who came and helped build the railway could not bring over their wives and children. Some men were separated from their wives and children for 25 years. It was only after WWII when they served and sacrificed for Canada were they finally recognized, given citizenship status and voting rights. This was only fifty years ago.

So a long history of exclusion and discrimination has stunted our community's political participation. I think it also affected the way people believe in the Canadian political system.

**da Flava:** Do you think our gap in social and political participation has caused us any problems?

**Dr. Li:** There is the mentality of being a "model minority." You have to work extra hard, be extra good, and not be associated with anything that is considered to be negative. A lot of times, people from a minority communities tend to act as a model minority as a result of the oppression they experience in society. So because there is so much negative stereotype and discrimination for many black people or Asian people they tend to want to work extra hard, be extra good. As if if you're not extra good, you're not as deserving of the same rights as other Canadians. The result is you want your children to be over-achievers. [...] When I first came over here, my aunt told me, "Be extra good. Don't let others look down on you and give excuses to say that Chinese people are useless. Show to them as an example that Chinese people are good." That kind of thinking is quite common in the older generations' thinking.

There is nothing wrong with thinking you want to be good. I think it is problematic when you have to be extra good to be as deserving as the same rights as everybody else. It is problematic if people have to think that way to avoid discrimination. But it is important to remember that every community has rich and poor, smart and foolish, good and bad. Just because we have the same diversity does not justify discrimination or oppression.

**da Flava:** Do you think that our internalization of the "model-minority" translates into any problems?

**Dr. Li:** Definitely. Undue pressure to kids. A lot of Asian parents expect a lot from their kids. I think stereotypes, whether they are negative or positive are harmful in different ways. Obviously, negative stereotypes stigmatize people, harm their self-esteem, create barriers. But positive stereotypes also put unfair pressure on the community as a whole and jeopardize diversity. [...] I think people should be recognized as individuals, by their own worth and talents. Imagine a Chinese kid who grew up not good in math or computer science, he would be in big trouble.

**da Flava:** That's right. I used to be good at math but not anymore.

**Dr. Li:** But, why do we all have to be good at math, just because we're Chinese? A lot of times this takes away our opportunity to explore other options.

**da Flava:** You were in medical school at U of T when "Campus Giveaway"\* aired on CTV's W5 in 1979. Do you think it is better now in Canada for the Chinese than before?

**Dr. Li:** Society has progressed. The anti-W5 campaign was a key page in the political development in the Chinese community. Social movements such as this and the work done by the Jewish and the black community in fighting for civil rights and social equity has made the society more open and embracing of diversity. [...] Racism today is less blatant and there is better legal protection. There is a general sense that racism is unacceptable. The social atmosphere is more open and more respectful. But I think the barriers are still there and in some ways, more challenging

to overcome because the oppressors have learnt to do things in more subtle, twisted fashions. [...] For example, in many job situations, there is a glass ceiling for minorities. Knowing that the social norm does not permit discrimination based on race, they'd tell you they won't hire or promote you not because you're Chinese, but because you have an accent, or you don't have good communication skills. So, fundamentally, our work continues.

But I think there is hope. Younger people are growing up together in a more diverse setting today. Hopefully, when people grow up together and learn to respect each other as equals since they're kids, they'd be in much better shape to build a more harmonious and fair society in the future when they are grown up and are in charge.

*\*In 1979 the Chinese Canadian communities launched a national protest campaign against CTV's W5 program in 1980 after it aired a program called "Campus Giveaway" that claimed "foreigners" are taking away university spaces from Canadian kids. The foreigners they showed on the program were all the Asian Canadian students in professional faculties such as medicine that only admit "Canadians." The message was: If you look "Asian," then you are a "foreigner" even if you hold a Canadian citizenship.*



da Flava's Sammy Lao, 24

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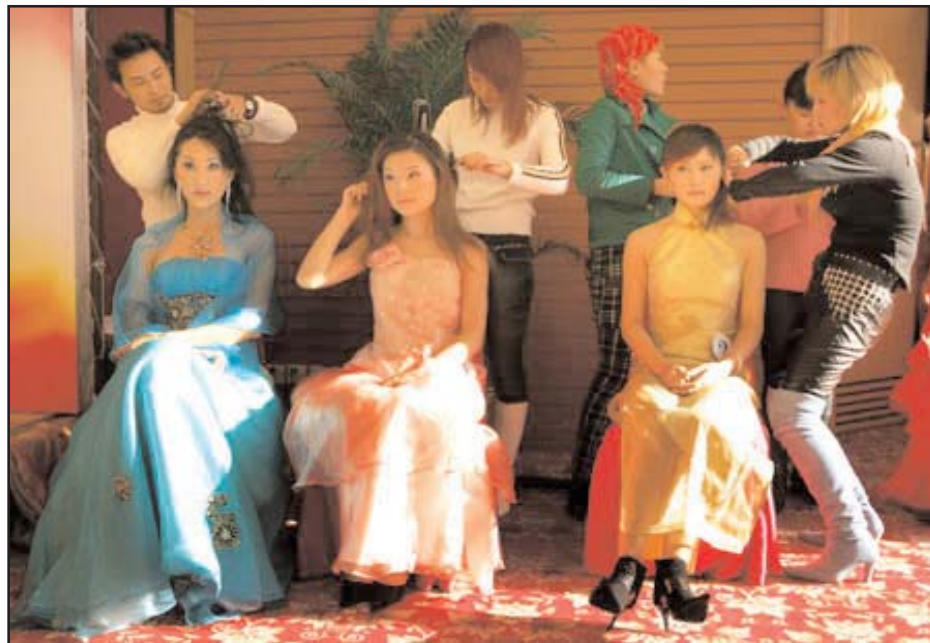


# Asians and the Caucasianization Craze

Look at Hollywood's portrayals of Oriental people. Many of them look "typically" Asian, don't they? Slanted eyes, black hair, light tan skin. Now look at many of the leading actors of movies coming out of China, Japan and Korea. See anything different? If you haven't noticed it yet, you will if you examine the films again. Those actors have round eyes, dyed brown hair and pale skin--in fact, they look almost Caucasian. And you know what? Oriental actors and actresses are not the only ones trying to look as non-Asian as possible. The sale of cosmetic products and surgeries that "Caucasianize" Asian people across the globe is an exploding multi-million-dollar business. You won't find much evidence of this phenomenon by visiting your local Shoppers Drug Mart, but go to high-end cosmetic stores or Asian beauty shops and you can easily obtain special dyes, glues and creams specially formulated to make Oriental people look European. Visit surgeons' offices in Canada and the East and you will discover that eyelid surgery, nose-jobs and jaw line reconstruction surgery are very popular procedures among Asian clients.

The desire to Caucasianize is almost pathological for some people. Many women (and some men) who are dissatisfied with their appearance move from topical treatments to surgery to too much surgery--just look at what happened to Chinese actress Julia Lui who claims that surgeons took too much off her jaw line, and now she is again dissatisfied with her appearance. The sickening epidemic of surgical Caucasianization has even led to the controversial "Miss Plastic Surgery" pageant in Beijing, which has caught the attention of Time and CNN and shocked Asians and non-Asians alike in the West. In Taiwan, toddlers are getting their eyelids done, and in Japan, noninvasive procedures called "petite surgeries" are earning \$100 million a year (<http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/1101020805/story.html>). While Caucasianizing products and surgeries are regarded as a bit of a shameful taboo for Oriental women in North America, it is aggressively marketed in some areas of China, Korea and Japan--and gaining increased acceptance here.

So just what is it exactly that some Asian women are doing to Caucasianize themselves? Well first there are skin bleaching creams. These are concoctions that are meant to whiten your skin. Their active ingredient is usually hydroquinone, and the over-the-counter strength creams are not strong enough to noticeably whiten most women's skin. Furthermore, they can cause blotching after sun exposure. Despite this, however, they sell in huge quantities both in certain drugstores and over the internet. They are to skin what whitening toothpastes are to teeth:



*Competitors preparing for the Miss Plastic Surgery pageant that took place in Beijing on December 12, 2004.*

big money-making products that give hope and don't work well.

Another popular seller is eyelid glues. They come with little forks and brushes and literally glue a crease in place that lasts for several hours. They're discreet but not permanent, and the beauty secret of thousands of Asian women (and possibly men) in Canada. Another product that can be used to create a "double eyelid" (a European-looking crease) are pre-cut pieces of tape that, when worn, support the fat over the lid. Some people decide to try and change their appearance at home by "training" their eyelids to fold by holding creases in place with toothpicks or sleeping with thin strips of tape over their lids. And finally, there is blepharoplasty:

the quick and common surgical procedure that allows Asian women and men to achieve a permanent double eyelid. If that is not enough madness, there are nose jobs, jaw-slimming surgeries, cheekbone and chin-enhancing surgeries, and painful bone-lengthening operations that can add a few inches to your height. There are also temporary measures like hair dye, coloured contact lenses, heated lash and brow irons, and skin-lightening foundations.

What do all these cultural artefacts say about Asian people? What is behind their

part of my childhood and undoubtedly that of many Asian children. It wasn't until my teens that I started realizing how ridiculous it all was. I decided that it just wasn't normal to watch friends sneak off periodically during outings to reapply their eyelid glue, or to be accused of having had surgery because my eyes weren't "almond-shaped," or for my parents to bribe my twelve-year-old sister with blepharoplasty in return for good grades (thankfully they never followed through, and my sister realised that she is pretty as she is and did not want the surgery after all). No non-Oriental person would ever have to deal with this stuff, so why do we?

Caucasianization is not strictly an Asian problem; women and men worldwide are paying money to remove the physical attributes that differentiate them from white people. Caucasianization is a symptom of a myriad of problems including globalization, culture and identity confusion, external and internalized racism, the epidemic spread of Western media, prejudice, acculturation, Eurocentric childhood education (for example, what kind of message does the name "Snow White" send to kids?) and pressures to conform. No one wants to admit what really lies beneath their desire to dye their hair blonde or wear powder that's two shades too light. And this is why the depression, insecurity and identity loss associated with Caucasianization will continue to ensnare generations of people, young and old--until we all become big-eyed, pale-skinned, light-haired, small-nosed, oval-faced freaks of science.



*da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 21, University of Toronto*



## 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.



# NO!!

When you stroll through the streets of downtown Toronto, it's rare to glimpse a bunch of young women who dress appropriately. Nowadays, mini skirts, tube tops, and ultra low-rise jeans are in. They are the trend for women as young as 12. They feel the need to fit in with what society thinks is "cool" and that includes how they dress. I think that as women, we should dress more appropriately.

Do you ever hear women complaining about how they hate it when guys look at them? Well they wouldn't be looking at you if you dressed with some common sense. When you're wearing a mini-skirt and belly top showing off all that you've got then you're asking for the attention that you receive. The males can't help but notice how you look because of the way you dress and it attracts them. You are drawing attention to yourself because of what you wear and if you don't like it, then the next time you're getting dressed, cover up-or stop complaining.

The billboards you see splashed across Yonge Street and all around downtown Toronto bear images of women or men selling a certain item with their bodies. This is completely outrageous because advertising is no longer about endorsing the value of the product; it's the image that gets you interested in buying something. Advertisements use both men and women, but the fact is that in our society men generally don't dress inappropriately aside from their baggy pants that hang below their bottoms. Ads don't really have any influence on guys except for when the media portrays young men decked out in designer or brand name clothing.

Young girls, however, are influenced by what they see on TV and the people around them who dress in super sexy clothing. They start asking their parents to buy similar items and most parents allow their children to dress that way. It appalls me when I see this because they are so young and yet they're walking around wearing little mini skirts and low-cut tops. It makes you wonder how society is going to turn out 10 years from now.

There are ways to dress that can make you feel sexy without having to wear minimal clothing. What's wrong with a pair of fitted jeans and a tank top? If you feel comfortable in what you're wearing and you think it makes you look and feel sexy then other people will, too. It's not about what you're wearing; it's about how you feel you look in your clothes. Dressing more conservatively can change the skanky image that society has assigned to women. This can prevent young females from being sucked into a world that a lot of women are stuck in now where they are being judged for how they dress instead of who they are.



by da Flava's Crystal Fung, 17,  
Jarvis Collegiate

## FACE OFF

### Bootylicious or just bad taste: Should young girls wear sexy clothes?



**The media is saturated with sex, and nowadays girls are showing more skin at a younger age. Is this a healthy expression of personal style, or a consequence of the media's objectification of women? Two youths debate this scandalous issue.**

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



by Lisa Charlebois

# YES!!

I'm watching Much Music as I write this article and so far I've seen 12 big-breasted women wearing tops that aren't exactly concealing their 'assets', 8 filets (the term a friend of mine uses for the fleshy part of a woman's backside that seems to find its way out of a pair of tight-hugging booty shorts) and about 5 bare midriffs. Funny, how all this sexuality can be crammed into a tiny five-minute video.

As a woman, I only have one thing to say...I think it's absolutely fantastic!

I believe that women should celebrate their bodies and their individual sexuality. Which is why I say the sexier clothes are, the better. It's true. Today's media has exploited women for their looks and bodies and essentially turned us into objects. But maybe it is through this objectification that women find their true power. This might be seen as a bit sneaky, but have you ever met a woman who hasn't used her sexuality to her advantage? It doesn't necessarily have to be devious and deceitful. A simple smile could be the thing that gets you a cab faster. Technically you are using your sexuality to your benefit, but what's wrong with a small, innocent gesture that tips the scales in your favour?

Men use their strength and size on a daily basis. Think about the last time you got on a crowded subway train. Obviously there's not a lot of room, but did that 250-pound guy standing in the doorway make any attempt to move? Nope. He just stood there like a statue, reading his newspaper as if nothing was happening. Think a woman could get away with such an act of disrespect?

Don't get me wrong. Dressing sexy doesn't mean women should have to tolerate cat-calls and sexually explicit remarks. Respect is something every human being deserves and it should not be directly linked to the clothes on your back. Do you feel good in a mini skirt? Then wear it! Everybody has the right to express themselves in whichever way they see fit.

So go for it. Magazines and television have been reinforcing sexually charged images for years. Why not use that power to your advantage? Just like the saying goes, "If you've got it, flaunt it!"

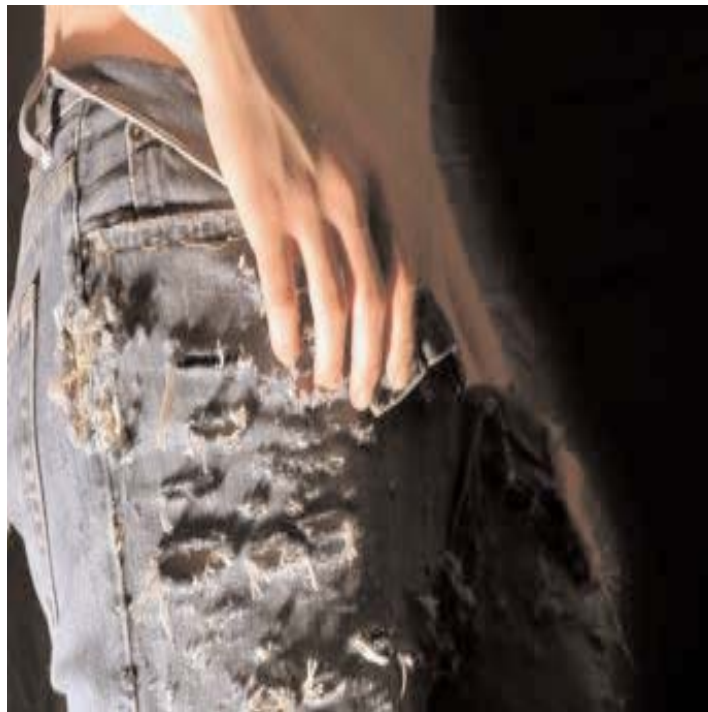


# Ask da Sexpert

## 170 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD HAVE AN STD...LEARN HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

Not telling your partner about something is worse than lying about it. Teenagers who are sexually active are not aware of the numerous strands of STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) that circulate among the people they deal with from day to day. You can get these diseases through sex, kissing, oral sex or even intimately touching an infected person. STDs are just that: they are diseases that are transferred through oral, vaginal or anal sex. Some are curable, but most will stay with you for the rest of your life. According to [sexualityandu.ca](http://sexualityandu.ca), women are socially, culturally and biologically more likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases and infections. So listen up, ladies!

The first step in preventing an STD is to insist on using a condom. Before you have sex with someone, it is important that both of you be tested. A sex test can be done at any hospital or clinic. This is especially important if you have had previous partners, unprotected sex and/or a suspicious feeling that something is not right with your body sexually. Aside from STDs, you can also contract Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). These include Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), Chlamydia, Genital Herpes, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B Virus, Gonorrhea, Trichomoniasis (Trich), and Syphilis. 1 in 5 Canadian women between 20-25 years old have HPV. The most common way for a person



can get infected is through sex (any type) with no condom. For example, the guy you gave oral sex to last night has herpes and he didn't tell you. This morning you notice painful sores around your mouth and lip area. That is how an STD is contracted! It is that simple and it can happen to anyone, so protect yourself and take 2 minutes to think about what you are dealing with! If you examine your partner and see strange warts or blisters, green or yellow discharge around the vagina or penis, listen to the voice in your head that screams: "Stay the hell away!"

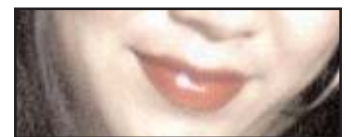
Now if you know that you have an STD from previous experiences, it is important to tell your future partner. If your girlfriend or boyfriend is a person who has or has had multiple partners, he or she is more likely to put you at risk for infection. The best way to protect yourself is to know your sexual partner and use a female or male condom every time. Discuss sexual history that is relevant to the

safety and health of your relationship. Your partner has the right to know this information before they engage in any type of sexual activity with you. There should be no surprises, especially ones that can destroy a person's health.

The best advice I can give is for you to talk to your partner and be straight forward. Do not be embarrassed if you have an STD and be prepared to face the fact that they may not want engage in sex with you after knowing this information. That

is their choice, and their right. Some partners may decide to wait until after you have received treatment and are healthy again before having sex with you-or some may just bounce. That does not discredit you for being honest with your partner and with yourself. Always use a condom to protect yourself. There is no easy way to ask if your partner has a STD or bring up causally the fact that you have one. Communication and getting tested at your doctor's office is the best way to start a healthy sexual relationship without spreading disease.

More information on STDs and testing is available at [www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)



da Flava's Sexpert

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

**E-mail me:  
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**da Sexpert offers advice about relationships and sex in every issue of *Catch da Flava*.**

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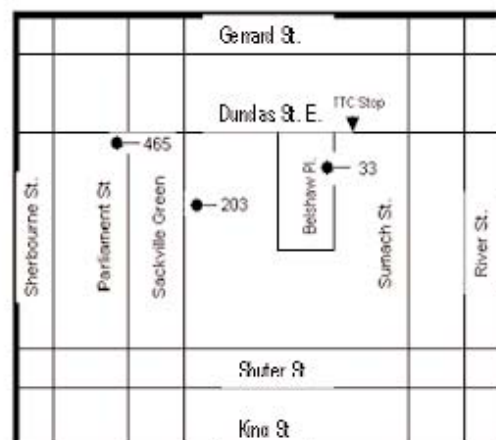
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For prenatal women and parents with  
children up to six years of age. This  
program provides in-home information and  
activities that promote healthy infant and  
child development. Parenting information,  
help with family issues and referrals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

# What are your opinions and concerns about Toronto youth culture?

## Voice your views at [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com)!



# REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

## Jeff Kugler Leaves Nelson Mandela Park School



**T**he Regent Park community will be sad to see Jeff Kugler, long-time principal of Nelson Mandela Park School, leave his current position to work at the University of Toronto. He has had a permanent influence on the neighbourhood and its members, as evidenced by recent interviews with his colleagues and community members recorded by da Flava's Tyrone MacLean-Wilson:

"Jeff has created some new initiatives

within the school. I know that when he leaves it will be carried on, the things he has started. The ideas that he comes up with were like "wow." Jeff will be able to bring that to his new workplace; our loss will be they're gain."

*-Lloyd Wyse, Special Needs Assistant and Educational Assistant*

"[...] You've got two kinds of principals. One principal who is good at working with the community; all they really ever do is

get programs and work with the community and they don't focus a lot on what's going on with in the school [...] And then you have another principal who just wants to work in the school. Very insular. They don't want to work with the community because it's just headaches for them. They see it as problematic. So they just work with in the school with the teaching. That's all they care about. [...] Jeff is a one in a million unique man that captivates or

has both those characteristics. He knows how to work with the community and bring everybody into the fold because he realizes that there are multiple caregivers around this community. You know grandmothers, uncles, aunts. Community agencies like Catch da Flava. He understands the importance of that and the importance of teaching the basics. [...] There's probably only a handful in the city that knows how to do both [...] very, very well."

*-Joe Leibovitch, Teacher*

"We've worked together for on and off 6 years. He's been very much a mantra to me and allowing me to explore a sort of leadership initiative which is has been very good for me. [...] He's left little pieces and touches of himself not just in the school but outside of the school in the bigger picture with his membership on the board of the health center. [...] I'm sure that the community is going to miss him immensely."

*-Wilma, Teacher*

*Join the Regent Park Community on Saturday June 25 from 12pm-3pm for a community farewell barbecue at the South Regent Park Community Centre.*

## Regent Park Focus Happenings

### New Focus Photo Exhibits

**Opens Tuesday June 28, 2005**

**The Journey Home Project: the launch and exhibit of an oral history photography project celebrating the experiences of Regent Park residents.**

**Belonging Photo Exhibit: An exhibit celebrating belongingness.**

### Catch da Flava 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 on Tuesdays at 7pm.**

### Catch da Flava Presents the LAST TUESDAYS SPEAKERS SERIES

**Come join us on the last Tuesday of each month to hear from interesting people. On Tuesday May 31st, spoken word artist Dwayne Morgan will be hosting a night of poetry and discussions from 6:30pm-8pm.**

### Writers Wanted

**Submit your poetry, opinion pieces and articles to Catch da Flava newspaper by going to [http://www.catchdaflava.com/Submit\\_20an\\_20Article](http://www.catchdaflava.com/Submit_20an_20Article)**

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

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Fridays 1 pm-3pm (women only)  
at Regent Park Focus**

### The Regent Park Focus Multimedia Summer Arts Program

**Register now! Free for youths ages 13-18. Learn video, radio and music production. (See ad on page 10)**

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

## Fresh Produce for Less at the Community Produce Market

**W**ell for all you people who don't already know, Mr. Wally Barak's Community Produce Market is back. Wally's mobile market provides families in Regent Park with fruits, vegetables and herbs from different cultures around the world. Although much of his produce is domestic, Wally has a wide selection of imported goods. So remember to drop by at the Community Produce Market on the southeast corner of Sumach and Dundas Street and support your local business. The Community Produce Market is open 7 days a week from 10am to 8pm.



## More Community Events:

Regent Park's Raoring Truth Theatre Company is presenting its inaugural performance on Sunday June 5 2005 at 3pm in the ballroom of the Gladstone Hotel (1214 Queen St. W). Call (416) 805-6714 for more information.

CoolBreeze is having a BBQ and bake sale on Saturday June 14, 2005 from 10am-5pm at the CRC (40 Oak St.). On July 29 at 9am, CoolBreeze will charter a bus to take Regent Park families to the Metro Zoo (zoo admission required). For more information on either of these events, call Valda at (416) 363-4234 x234.



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