

# Catch da Flava

September/October 2005

www.catchdaflava.com

Volume 11 Issue 2

Youth and Community Newspaper Produced by the Regent Park Focus

## The Real Life After School



### What your teachers don't teach you about life after university

**M**ay 2003. I had been counting down the days to graduation for four years, yet it seemed to sneak up on me so quickly. I would miss my friends and working at the school radio and TV stations, but the whole world was ahead of me. Eager employers were ready for the brightest and most ambitious university graduates. With my degree, I could expect to earn up to 75% more than people without a degree. In this day and age, if you want a good job, you will need a university education. These things I expected.

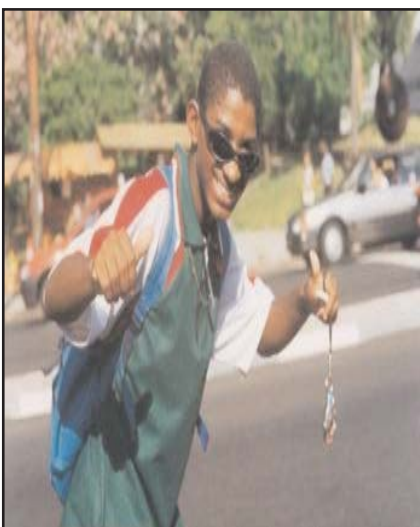
What I didn't expect was the feeling of loss after my subsequent freedom. For my whole life, I knew just what to do: you go to elementary school, you go to high school, you go to college. No questions asked. Yet for the first time I stood before an unknown universe, wondering what I should do with my life. Where and how do I apply for a job? Is my resume good enough? Are there jobs available in my field? Should I start with an internship? How do I gain valuable out-of-school experience? So many questions faced me and I felt I had so few answers. After almost two years, I realized the ugly truth: there's a plethora of things they simply DON'T teach you in school, and these may be the most important lessons.

#### 1. Getting a job out of college is HARD!!!

You apply to fifty employers with your stunning grades, a multitude of extracurricular activities and eagerness to work. With some luck, one or two employers may call you back. It's easy to find yourself feeling uber-frustrated and burnt-out after college. Many ex-students, such as myself, head into industries with high turnover rates (restaurants, bars, gas stations, sales, etc.) until something pops up in our fields. Why is it so difficult? Many employers are simply too busy to skim through your resume and actually respond. After all, they are bombarded with tons of new applicants. This will be a common sentiment you hear from your potential employers, one that you will surely be sick of hearing in a hurry. Or could it be that you're lacking something vital - that dreaded "real world experience"?

#### 2. "Real World Experience" is more important than what school you attended or what grades you achieved!

*We've all heard that university is essential if you want a high-paying job. But is this true? There's a lot more to landing your dream career than a solid education.*



**Face Off: Should There Be Black Schools?**

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## LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

*Catch da Flava* is a youth and community newspaper that is published bi-monthly. The newspaper is distributed FREE to households, schools, libraries and community groups across downtown Toronto.

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

*Catch da Flava* welcomes letters and submissions from young people (up to age 24). Submissions should be no 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](mailto:mail@catchdaflava.com)

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# Editorial

## Big Brother is Watching You

It seems like every week, another story about a gruesome gunning invades the pages of the paper and images of more brutal fatalities flash on the six o'clock news. Over the past few months, 51 people have lost their lives to violence, and 41 of those deaths were gun-related. The numbers continue to rise, and many of the victims and perpetrators of this violence have been youth.

This begs the inevitable question: how do we stop the violence? This question has stirred a flurry of responses from various sectors of our society. One common response is to call for increased security and surveillance of high-risk communities.

This year, the Toronto Police Services Board authorised the spending of an additional \$12 million to hire 150 new police officers as part of a plan to increase security in vulnerable neighbourhoods. Even this was not enough for some. City Councillor Michael Thompson raised a storm of controversy when he advocated youth curfews and the targeting of young black men to random police checks, a practice more commonly referred to as racial profiling or racial bias policing. Contrary to promoting public safety, racial profiling is divisive and only serves to victimize innocent people and discourage young people and their families from cooperating with the police. Although Thompson's proposal was unanimously rejected, the security issue remains high on the agenda.

For instance Toronto Community Housing, Canada's largest public housing landlord, recently announced that they would spend more than \$9 million on security improvements including more surveillance cameras. In a similar vein, the provincial government is going to install 878 security access

devices (video surveillance and intercom systems) in elementary schools across the city as part of their Safe Welcome Program (can you say doublespeak?).

Big Brother is not a way to respond to youth violence. Cameras - assuming they even scare people anymore - will only move the violence to other darker unmonitored corners.

If we want safe communities, we need to develop creative strategies that involve young people in their planning and implementation. We need to come up with holistic multifaceted solutions that remove systemic barriers to affordable housing, affordable daycare, employment opportunities and entry into post-secondary institutions. We need to design healthier pedestrian-friendly communities that encourage street-level interaction, where people have access to neighbourhood services, enriched after school programs, and where local businesses can thrive.

We also need to address the values of corporate media which very few people are willing to talk about. For every news report that reminds us how devastating violence is, there are at least a dozen music videos and TV shows glamorising gangster mentality and the use of guns and physical violence as a way of earning respect and resolving conflicts.

In attempting to solve these problems we must always remember that despite the fact that we are seeing an increase in gun violence in our communities, only a small sub-culture of young people are involved in the gun culture. The vast majority of youth are law-abiding contributing citizens.

*by Adonis Huggins and Bo Wen Chan*

### ONE CITY COUNCILLOR'S VIEWS ON RACIAL PROFILING



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# Teacher Knows Best

## A Surefire Recipe for Beating the Back-to-School Blues

September means different things for different people. It is not uncommon to see parents doing round-offs and back flip gymnastic combinations down the sidewalks of neighbourhood streets on the first day of school. In the words of one parent, "Thank the Blessed Lord and all deities under the sun that my kids are going back to school. Freedom, Sweet Freedom - you're the teacher's problem now sonny."

Teachers on the other hand have their first bout of depression when the back to school commercials aired in the first week of August. No more sipping coffee on the porch in the backyard, now they have to gulp it down between classes.

As for students, once they get over the spending high brought on with the purchases of the funktified new outfits, a home computer and overflowing backpack supplies, they remember why their parents bought the stuff in the first place...to go to school, specifically to go to class, do homework, study and pass tests. Going back to school is inevitable - I mean you can't possibly hide in the basement forever - plus, who would see you in your funktified new outfits? Exactly - NO ONE.

Kids who tend to really get into school fall into two categories:

Category # 1 - Super Smart Brainiacs Who Love Outperforming Everyone Else in the School

These students are totally driven and see school as sport for their brains. Tests are like NBA playoffs, projects are like conquering Mount Everest, Parent-Teacher Night is like standing on the podium for a gold medal at the Olympics. Unfortunately more often than not, these students are social misfits and couldn't get a date for the school prom if their lives depended on it (assuming they would want to go of course).

Category # 2 - Socialites United

These kids have a "gift for the gab." Every bit of school time is seen as time to get their plans organized and talk about the interesting aspects of life (definitely info not found in any textbook). These kids know the score or will make it up if they don't have a clue. When to hook up on MSN, who is going out with who, where to meet at lunch time, what "really" happened behind the portables etc. Unfortunately

the best grade that a teacher could hope for from this group of constant academic underachievers is a C.

You're probably scratching your head and asking, "So to actually like school you need to be a walking encyclopaedia or a motor-mouth?" Well lucky for you, most students are a mixture of Socialites United and the Super Smart Brainiac. But if you find yourself at either end of the spectrum I'm here to help you with my very own

socialization is an absolute must in human development. It is good to have friends and know how to keep them (not by giving them stuff or letting them walk all over you and use you as a source of amusement DUMB-DUMB but by treating them with respect). The rule to follow in order to keep these parts equal is: classroom time is brainiac time; class change, lunch time and after school is for socializing.

with some ole fashioned Intramural Glory.

### *Ingredient 4: Risk Factor*

Mix in a heaping cup full of Risk Factor - not to be mistaken for Stupid Factor. Risk Factor means leaving your comfort zone and trying something new each and every year. Example of a Risk Factor: you love to sing in the shower so you gather up the courage to join the choir at school. Stupid Factor: your classmates dare you to climb up on top of the school and do a somersault down because they want to catch you in a blanket.

### *Ingredient 5: Haterade*

Haterade is under NO circumstances to be added to the batter!!!! Stop the Hate, Appreciate!! If you start the school year off with negative comments and just plain nasty thoughts and actions, school will SUCK big time. I guarantee it 100%: Haterade will contaminate the mixture and the pie will be the foulest tasting thing under the sun.

Mix all ingredients (except that disgusting Haterade) into the classroom, gym, cafeteria, office hallways, and playground. Let it rise steadily but surely from September to June. Check on it regularly to make sure all ingredients have been included in the proper measure and check if adjustments need to be made.

Have a slice every now and again to remind yourself that school really ain't all that bad!



*Teacher Knows Best comes up with a recipe for scholastic success*

Wipe-Your-Eye-Get-Through-the-School-Year-Pie.

### ***Recipe for Wipe-Your-Eye-Get-Through-the-School-Year-Pie.***

#### *Ingredient 1: Socialites United*

Mix in equal parts of Super Smart Brainiacs Who Love Outperforming Everyone Else in the School and Socialites United. One cannot be added more than the other. Getting into learning new concepts and challenging yourself academically can be a real high. Comparing your scores to others is where the crappy part of the Brainiac world exists. On the reverse side,

#### *Ingredient 2: Trustworthy Crew*

A healthy handful of a Trustworthy Crew is to be added at the beginning of the school year. Mix old and new friends to keep the batter from spoiling.

#### *Ingredient 3: Intramural Glory*

If your school does not have intramural (non-competitive fun sporting activities usually held during lunch-time), get the ball rolling yourself. Who's not gonna like a wacky scooter board game, or a European Handball showdown? Get the Trustworthy Crew of old and new together, a teacher volunteer and hoop it up in the gym to blow the boring school blues away



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



# Coming Out



The notion that I was gay came upon me in my mid-teens. During this time there were no Ellen Degeneres's or KD Lang's for me to look up to. The images that came to my mind were of leather-clad female motorcyclists who lived in dark places and were probably perverted in some way. How would I have known any different? Nonetheless I was immensely curious about the prospects of this new me emerging. When it struck me that this was not the new me, but the real me, I plodded on in my quest for information.

I sat and thought about where I could possibly find other lesbians. Now I couldn't tell you where this idea came from, but it occurred to me that there must be something in the phonebook. So I pulled out the Yellow Pages and tried to find something listed under the word 'gay.' To my disappointment I found nothing. Not being one to give up, I flipped to the word 'lesbian' and struck gold. I found the listing for the Lesbian Mother's Defense Fund. I picked up the phone and dialed the number. I remember being surprised at how natural this seemed. Now when I think of it I laugh, because I really did let my fingers do the walking. I left a message for them and asked them to call me back. A couple of days later a woman called me and through luck or fate I was the one who answered the call. I asked this woman what their organization did. She happily told me that they assisted mothers who were coming out of marriages with legal costs and gaining custody of their children. When I told her that I was sixteen and was coming out, she gave me information about the 519 Community Centre and the Lesbian and Gay Youth group. She wasn't sure when they

met, but gave me the phone number and wished me luck.

I showed up to the first meeting scared as hell. I felt awkward and hid my face behind my straggly hair. The receptionist who looked like somebody's kindly aunt and not at all like a pervert showed me where to go and I climbed the stairs to my destiny. I arrived on a special night. We were treated to a concert of sorts by a group of gay men dressed as nuns who called themselves 'The Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Indulgence' if my memory serves me correctly. They sang tunes like 'Your Son Will Come Out Tomorrow' and other satirical tunes cleverly molded into political themes. What made them so funny was that most of the performers had either a full beard or mustache or both. It was a lot to take in for my first exposure to the gay community.

Soon I began attending a Monday night meeting just for women where I met many other lesbians of all ages. It was during this time that I began to feel the goodness of being gay. I was a true baby dyke and these women accepted me. They even asked me at 17 to join a lesbian phone support line for women just coming out. So at that age I began helping other women come out. We answered calls at the Women's Resource Centre. We had one phone with one line and we were available one night per week. We took

calls from anyone who called be they men or women as long as they were keeping it clean and truly seemed to need information.

It didn't take me long to understand what homophobia was. When I told my close friend that I was gay she literally ran away from me and never spoke to me again. I confided in another classmate, thinking that she would keep it between us. I considered her to be a trusted friend because we always ate lunch together. The next day the entire school seemed to know about it and my locker was spray-painted with the word 'dyke' for all to see. There was more than one occasion where girls would leave a bathroom if I was in it. One actually said on her way out that she would not go to the bathroom in the same room as a dirty lesbian. Then there was the boy that was convinced that I needed to see his penis and threatened to do so on more than one occasion. At first I ignored him but finally told him if he did, I would cut it off. He did not show it to me.

Things were not much easier at home. The girls who lived in the house with me were always complaining about one thing or another when it came to anything I did. Apparently it was okay for them to have their boyfriends over, but it was a different thing altogether if I tried to bring a girl over. It was for this reason that I left that place. I tried to keep up school for a time, but not having a place to live and experiencing the kind of hostility I did on a day-to-day basis made this impossible.

For about a year I lived as a street kid. It was a hard thing. For the most part, I

dropped out of the gay community during this time. I was sitting at Yonge and Dundas by the Eaton Centre one day when a woman from the Monday night group came up to me and told me that everybody had been worried about me. It was these women who offered me shelter in their homes which gave me the strength to go on and face the world. I am now enormously proud to say that I have made it though good times and bad. I have seen many great changes in the twenty years I have been out and I am looking forward to seeing how much better it will be in the next twenty.

I know that homophobia is still an issue in many schools and other places, but it is my hope that through education and more supportive school environments, young lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender teenagers will be able to get the most out of their high school years so that they can look back on those times with fondness and a smile on their faces.



by Darlene Parquette  
(photo by Holly Naraine, 6 years old)

## POET'S CORNER

### A Soul Tie

The moment will never be forgotten  
the STARE that was burned on the inside  
seems like seconds, only it's been hours  
SENSE of unity without physically touching  
HEARING their deepest thoughts without saying a word  
wherever you go, whomever you're with  
will ALWAYS be there, in the back of your mind  
the stare - A Soul Tie.

Hard to know if the knot will be undone

(written by karis)

# Questions About the Regent Park Redevelopment

**Q** : I heard that people have already started moving out of Regent Park because of the redevelopment. Where exactly are all the residents going to? Have they found housing in the neighbourhood? When is the construction going to start?

**A** : The construction of the first phase of the Regent Park redevelopment is going to take place in the spring of 2006. People have already begun to move out, courtesy of Toronto Community Housing who subsidised all moving expenses. Here is a brief update on where the tenants (who have selected a unit) have gone so far:

- 40% are staying within Regent Park
- 46% are moving to a surrounding neighbourhood

- 11% are moving to other areas within TCHC
- 3% are moving outside of TCHC

*This information was provided by:*

*Jennifer Cargnelli*

*Relocation Manager*

*Toronto Community Housing Corporation*

*Tel: (416) 981-6737*

*The winning bid for the architectural design of one of the new Regent Park highrises is now on display at the Regent Park Focus, 600 Dundas St. E (rear basement). For more information, call 416-863-1074.*

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### Mondays

#### Diva Girls Group

4:00PM - 6:00PM

Ages: 12 to 15

#### Youth Photography

5:30PM - 7:30PM

Ages: 13 to 19

### Tuesdays

#### Catch da Flava Youth Radio & Newspaper Committee

5:00PM - 8:00PM

Ages: 13 to 19

### Thursdays

#### Hip-Hop Thursdays

5:00PM - 8:00PM

#### New Media Program

5:00PM - 8:00PM

Ages: 13 to 19

### Saturdays

#### Video Animation

1:00PM - 3:00PM

Ages: 12 to 15



# The Real Life After School

*...continued from cover*

If you worked several internships while going to school full-time, you're one of the lucky ones. Otherwise, employers scoff at your resume. They know that the university experience is like living and operating in a bubble, slightly out of touch with reality. Hypothetical situations cannot possibly compare to real-world situations. You can expect your first year out of school to be like one long internship unless you get started while you're still in school. I hit up several brick-wall interview sessions before I realized the common theme: I would list my university achievements like a star and they'd look at me with a blank face and say, "Yeah? So what? What real world experience do you have?"

### 3. There isn't a surplus of entry-level jobs.

I assumed that in the bustling world of business, there'd always be promotions, people moving up, people retiring, and new positions around the bottom opening up. But this is not necessarily the case. Granted every industry is different, but take for example General Motors. Last year in my dad's section, two guys retired and two guys had heart attacks. Instead of hiring four new people to take over the empty positions, they gave four people's responsibilities all to my dad, the maintenance manager/floor supervisor! This, in effect, means that no one will be moving up and no new entry level jobs will be open. In business, consolidation is becoming more and more prevalent. Don't believe me? Then why was 2004 the fourth consecutive year of over one million layoffs? Xerox, Colgate, AOL-Time Warner, Cingular and United Airlines are among a few companies with massive layoffs this year. They represent many different industries, which leads me to believe that increasing healthcare and energy burdens are taking their toll on employers, which in turn affects recent grads.

### 4. You will not necessarily be making \$20,000-30,000 a year as a recent graduate.

Get over it! This past year I was depressed to find that I had only made \$12,000 at best. In fact, I don't have any friends making upwards of \$20,000. Of course, then again, most of my friends aren't even working in their fields! Then there's my boyfriend. He's making \$25,000 a year at a call center and he hasn't even finished university yet. However, don't get around to thinking your degree

down your old records, explain what you've been doing the last few years, find references, and get back into learning mode again! In Canada, skilled trades such as welding, painting, electrical apprenticeship, carpentry, robotics, machinists and even website creation are vital professions in high demand. While shooting for your dream, you can surely get a steady job with benefits in these fields!

positions by job title) and [www.flipdog.com](http://www.flipdog.com). I set up automated job searches on many of these sites so every week I get mailed the freshest jobs in my field. Let's face it: most of us are too busy to be running from employer to employer throughout the GTA to get applications and try to set up meetings.

### 7. You will MISS school!

It seems impossible at first. Who would miss lack of sleep, pop quizzes, 10 page papers, and choosing good grades over making money? You won't notice it right away. But after a while, you'll find yourself reading more books, scouring the newspapers and seeking out new friends and philosophies in a desperate attempt to keep learning. I'm forever fearful that my fertile mind will become stagnant from disuse. Life seemed so much simpler when you were back on course being told what to do.

While this may seem depressing to learn, don't let it bog you down in your post-grad job hunt. Just be sure you take a quick reality check before graduating to ease the transitional shock. Take steps as early as your first year towards getting real-world experience and making goals for where to apply or where to live. Check jobsites frequently and see what's going on in your field. As GI Joe said, "Knowing is half the battle!" After all, you want to fly easily out of university, instead of feeling like a baby bird pushed prematurely out of the nest!



*You'll need more than a good education to make your resume stand out to potential employers.*

doesn't matter at all. It is in fact a prerequisite for many top-level jobs. And unfortunately so is 3-5 years experience.

### 5. A teaching degree or a skilled trade is always a great thing to fall back on!

My parents told me freshman year, "Why not get an education degree as well? For a couple more credits, it's a stable profession." I scoffed at them. Why would I want to go through school my whole life just to go back? Now I wish I had taken their advice. Going back to school is much more complicated after you've taken some time off. You have to track

### 6. There are some websites that could help you a lot.

I know there are more best kept secrets out there, but I'd advise checking the labour board's website (<http://www.statcan.ca/start.html> -Canada) to see what the job market is like in your field so you can develop a realistic concept of what to expect. As for specifics, I hit up [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) hard after graduating to find communication and writing jobs. I also found my way onto [www.workopolis.com](http://www.workopolis.com) (which is great because you can "Fast Track" your field and get tons of



*by Jennn Stachowski, 24*



## Got A Beef?

Don't Just Sit There, Write About It



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# NO!!

Afrocentric/black-focus schools are not needed, especially in a city as diverse as Toronto. To have a school segregate one particular cultural background is a bad idea because it may separate that minority from mainstream society and spreading negative stereotypes that already exist about that group - which is exactly what they do not want.

First off if there are Afrocentric/black-focus schools, then who is to say that other cultures such as Asians, Latin Americans or First Nations People won't want to start having their own schools? Some also argue that if we all pay the same taxes, and our children all attend school, why should one particular culture get special treatment?

Secondly, since our city is so culturally diverse, there isn't any one area that is heavily enough populated by blacks to accommodate such a school. I also doubt that students would want to travel from miles around to reach this special school.

One major argument for having these schools is that the teachers and authority figures would be black, so students would truly be able to relate to their elders. Yet lots of reasons for black students' low attendance and high dropout rates stem from home, personal problems or issues in other parts of their lives - not because of a lack of black teachers or an Afrocentric curriculum. Members of other cultures may even feel that this is a form of reverse racism where black people are getting different treatment despite the fact that other cultural populations are very high in this city.

The real issue behind black schools is the lack of black culture education in the curriculum itself. It's not only black students who need to learn about black culture, but schools and society as a whole. This would hopefully reduce the discrimination and prejudice that people of African descent have always faced, especially in schools. Problem is, for the government to reevaluate then create a more Afrocentric curriculum, it would take far too much time and money that they are not willing to give. So instead, the government and board of education can dole out a little money for black schools which would not rock the boat for mainstream education. It's a way to get the people off the government's back; the board of education can say they are promoting black education by making a small financial contribution, while continuing with a mainstream education that needs to be extremely adjusted. Change of that magnitude takes constant pressure on the government. Will society as a whole step up and push the board of education enough to make these greatly needed changes? Only time will tell if Afrocentric/black-focus schooling will prevail.



by da Flava's Angela Musceo, 20

## FACE OFF

### Should There Be Separate Schools For Black Youth?



**Some teachers and administrators in Canada and the US are suggesting that there should be schools targeted at black youth. Do black teens need their own schools because they have a distinct heritage and deal with unique issues, or is this merely racism in disguise?**

lum. There is nothing in the history books that reflect the black students or minority students in general. Back in Sudan, Africa, I remember being taught about Canadian and American history, and at the same we were learning about our own Sudanese history. Since we have so much respect for Canada and the States, why don't these countries give me the same respect? The history being taught in schools shouldn't just reflect one race, it should reflect all races, all faces.

I think if we can have religious schools, we should have race-based schools - it just makes sense. Black focus schools would challenge the underlying racist assumptions that black students face on a daily basis within the education system. The black focus schools would have more black teachers, guidance counsellors, Africa-centric curriculum and more open discussions about race. Black students need black focus schools. It's not segregation; only whites who are comfortable with their superiority and privilege in society will continue sloganeering "No Segregation!" when in fact black focus schools are not a form of segregation - it's respect.



by Emmanuel Kedini

# YES!!

Black students need black schools. Call it racism if you like - I will call it giving a chance for black students to excel in school.

Ontario schools have failed black students by streaming black students into non-post-secondary fields of study, having too few teachers of colour and not having enough courses on black accomplishments. Having black focus schools with black teachers would instil confidence by giving students role models who reflect their cultural background. Having black guidance councillors would point the students in the right path for secondary education and other goals. In black focus schools, a black youth wouldn't feel intimidated, left out, threatened, or be treated differently.

Canada is a multicultural country. Statistics Canada reported that the number of visible minorities in Canada is rising rapidly; in fact by 2050 the minority population of this province and this country will become the majority. Yet school administrators do not want to change the curriculum to reflect the population. In fact, they have done the opposite.

Ontario schools have failed black students because there is little or no black education in the school curriculum.

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



# The Choice Is Yours

## A Cheap and Dangerous High

Would you eat paint thinner, battery acid, flammable retardants and other poisonous substances from your local hardware store? How about putting the fumes from over a dozen of those lethal chemicals directly into your bloodstream? That's what thousands of teens across North America are doing on a regular basis in order to get high. The "hot" drug they're using is crystal methamphetamine, also known as Tina, crank, jib, tek, zip, shards, speed, meth, crystal, ice and other catchy names. It's about half the price of ecstasy, its effects can last for days, it can be brewed in your own basement and it's one of the most addictive and dangerous illicit substances on the market today.

Crystal meth is a methylized form of amphetamine, which is a synthesized from a natural stimulant called ephedrine. Stimulants make you act and feel hyper by increasing your heart rate, blood pressure and dopamine levels, among other things. Pseudoephedrine is found in many over-the-counter cold medications like Sudafed and is relatively harmless when ingested in low doses. Amphetamine (i.e. speed) is derived from ephedrine and it was originally used to treat nasal congestion in the 1930s. It was also used to help pilots stay awake during WWII, and is found in prescription medications that treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and narcolepsy. Methamphetamine is a chemically different form of amphetamine that has much more powerful stimulant effects on the central nervous system. It is found in low doses in the prescription medication Dexedrine or Desoxynl. Methamphetamine hydrochloride, commonly known as crystal meth, is a type of methamphetamine that people have learnt to create by cooking a concoction of pseudoephedrine, red phosphorus (this is found on the strip of a matchbook), iodine crystals and a mix of industrial poisons. Some crystal meth that was seized by police also contained traces of human urine, which gave the drug a yellow tint.

As its name suggests, crystal meth looks like crushed pieces of crystal or ice. It is

odourless and its colour ranges from clear to yellowish depending on its purity (and maybe on whether or not someone has peed in the batch). It is usually smoked, although it can also be ingested as it has been found in varying amounts in over



*Crystal meth is becoming the drug of choice for a growing number of young people, but it can seriously damage your mind and body.*

half the so-called ecstasy pills seized by police in clubs and raves (British Columbia Ministry of Health, 2004). Stats Can states that about 2% of teens have tried crystal meth, but there are probably many others who have taken it unknowingly through ecstasy.

Crystal meth works by passing from your lungs into your bloodstream and into your brain where it simultaneously 1) induces the unnatural release of serotonin and dopamine, which are neurotransmitters (i.e. brain chemicals) that regulate mood and arousal, 2) blocks their reuptake (i.e. prevents them from being reabsorbed and broken down in the brain) and 3) using up monoamine oxidase, which as an enzyme that breaks down monoamines such as serotonin and dopamine.

The excess serotonin and dopamine that accumulates in your brain as a result of doing crystal meth can cause a wide array

of effects including feelings of exhilaration, increased sexual prowess, decreased fatigue, loss of appetite, increased heart rate and blood pressure, hyperactivity, paranoia, increased irritability and aggressiveness, acne-like sores, the feeling that

there are bugs crawling on your skin, convulsions, rages ("tweaking"), heart attacks and much more. Long-term consequences can include irreversible brain damage due to the abuse of serotonin and dopamine systems, heart, lung and/or liver failure. Crystal meth is highly addictive and people tend to develop a tolerance for it quickly, meaning they need increasingly higher doses over time to achieve the same effects. Furthermore, withdrawal can be very unpleasant as depression often sets in after users stop taking the drug, and this can trigger new cravings.

Those who are more likely to use crystal meth include young people in rural areas where other street drugs are not accessible, people in the rave scene, teens who want to lose weight and gay men who frequent bathhouses (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/drugs/crystalmeth.html>). But everyone is at risk because this drug is so easy to pro-

duce and growing in popularity. The best way to safeguard yourself from its detrimental effects is obviously to abstain from it and any other drug that might contain crystal meth. But if you insist on doing it, at least reduce your likelihood of causing permanent damage. Keep hydrated and eat; even if you don't feel thirsty or hungry, your body is craving the nutrients and vitamins that crystal meth so effectively steals from your bloodstream. Don't mix meth with other stimulants (ex. cocaine or ecstasy), antidepressants, blood-pressure medications or downers (ex. GHB or alcohol) as the combined drugs could cause dangerous complications for your heart and liver. Abstain from taking more drugs when you're already high as this can lead to an overdose; after all your decision-making skills aren't the sharpest when your brain is frying. Try to take it in the morning - this may reduce the amount of sleep you lose. Don't do it often (if you can't do this, you're probably addicted or on the road to addiction whether you think so or not). Finally, don't pick at the non-existent bugs on your skin if you can help it; a lot of users get scabs and scars this way.

If you are a current user and feel you need help because crystal meth (or any other drug) is ruining your life (or close to), contact the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health for an addiction assessment at 416-535-8501 extension 6128 (33 Russell Street) or extension 7064 (175 Brentcliffe Road).



*by 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.



# In Conversation With Pam McConnell



City Councillor Pam McConnell

**R**ecently, *Catch da Flava's* Tyrone MacLean-Wilson had a chance to interview City Councillor Pam McConnell to find out how she feels about Regent Park, young people, and working at City Hall. Read on to learn what she had to say.

**da Flava:** How long have you been serving the Regent Park area as a councillor and school trustee?

**McConnell:** It's over 20 years that I've been representing it now [...] by the end of this term I'll have been representing for 24 years; it's a long time.

**da Flava:** What does a city councillor do exactly?

**McConnell:** We work on making laws for our city. The laws are called bylaws. They cover everything from development rights, zoning, parking, public health, recreation, libraries, a whole range of public services, community services and welfare.

We also have agencies for commissions and those run some major services in the city. One of them is the police, which I sit on, and another is the transportation, TTC. We obviously have emergency services that are under our jurisdictions as well. So really everything that really happens in the life of a city - the growing and building of a city - is decided at city council.

**da Flava:** What do you think the residents of Regent Park want for the city?

**McConnell:** Well I think that they want to have a strong vibrant safe community to live in. They want - like all of us - to have a future for their children. They want to have a circumstance where their neighbourhood is connected to parts of the city. I think they have probably the same aspirations as any other neighbourhood. But they also have some of the most serious challenges also. One of the major challenges is that the cars don't go through Regent Park. The grid road system just sort of stopped at Regent Park and left it as an island.

Now when we did development in the forties they thought this was a great idea because it was a nice safe pedestrian place for the children. But what it did was isolate the kids and isolate the community - like an island in the center of another neighbourhood - so one of the challenges will be to really reconnect the community.

I think that [...] the people of Regent Park want respect for the work that they do and they want respect for their opinions. I have learned all these 20 years that they have a lot [...] of intelligent things to say about how their community should run and be developed. [...] The revitalization of Regent Park is actually quite exciting because people are beginning to talk about it. I know people are fearful about some things, but I think through talking through it, they'll be able to express their views and sort through their ideas.

**da Flava:** What are the kinds of challenges that come with being a city councillor?

**McConnell:** I think one of the biggest challenges of being a city councillor is just trying to stay on time. We have an enormous amount of work. I'm sure that people don't really have any idea how much work we really do. For example on the weekend I was at a community event at police headquarters that honoured people in our communities that have done very brave acts. One of them was actually a neighbour of mine when I was in Sprucecourt. Then at the same time, day before, I was at Parliament Street having a petition signed for the Hortons going into the Winchester Hotel.

In the meantime in between all of those sorts of things I was missing a senior's Filipino event in the evening and at the same time trying to read about two to

three feet of our agenda. It's really two or three telephone directories of Toronto, so I have to read all of that. So this is the only weekend where I'll be able to dig in my garden - so I was nearly in my pyjamas that Sunday morning, trying to get a few hours in before I went to police services. These are the sorts of things we are always wrestling with; trying to get something ready before you run off for the evening meeting.

So you're always trying to make sure what you're saying is relevant and so often you're speaking off the top of your head but you need to have the background and you really need to understand it. So this for me is really the big challenge. Because this is life-long learning: constantly having a whole bunch of new issues coming at you that you never even imagined having to be an expert on then instantly having to be an expert. And so I think that that kind of time management, people say, "You know well what we really need is time managers." I just need a lot more time - then I would be able to manage it fine. But squeezing all that into 7 days a week, 24 hours a day is really quite a challenge, [especially] to come home to your family and have them know who you are.

**da Flava:** What is the most rewarding part about being a city councillor?

**McConnell:** The life of a councillor is incredibly rewarding because it gives you the opportunity to represent some of the most diverse voices in the City of Toronto and some of the most marvellous people, of all ages for all of these years. We've really grown up together and it's really been a marvellous experience.

**da Flava:** Do you read *Catch da Flava* Newspaper?

**McConnell:** Yes absolutely! I think it's wonderful, all the way from the title of it to the stories that the people write. I think it's a very vibrant voice of Regent Park. I

very much support it. I've always found it to be exciting when I read it because I hope that I know a lot about what's going on in Regent Park, but there are always several things in *Catch da Flava* that I didn't know about so I always think that's great.

A lot of that comes from the kids that participate in it and are able to talk and share some of their ideas. I'm actually a great believer and I remember when I was young, I think that that's a really important thing to do and I think that it's important to recognize what was exciting about being young.

And part of it is they have really creative and thoughtful ideas. Young people don't tend to have barriers of ideas; they just let the ideas flow, they never say, "Oh I've done that and it doesn't work." I've always thought that if you really want to have visions for the future, you have to really keep a keen ear on what kids are talking about. Because they are the ones that are going to be in charge and I think it's a really good idea to listen to their ideas - to look at those ideas and see how to take some of those ideas and run them and implement them. So I think that [...] the teenagers are the most creative and have the most vibrant ideas [...] *Catch da Flava* really catches that flavour.



da Flava's Tyrone MacLean-Wilson, 20

## The Eyes and Ears of Regent Park

[WWW.CATCHDAFLAVA.COM](http://WWW.CATCHDAFLAVA.COM)

# Ask da Sexpert

## Dating Dilemma Q&A



*Have you ever wondered whether or not it's okay to kiss on a first date, or what to do when your partner's friend makes a pass at you? In this issue, da Sexpert presents solutions to some common dating dilemmas.*

**My partner is moving away and I'm worried about what will happen to us. Should we try a long-distance relationship or just "take a break"?**

Physical separation is an obstacle to any relationship - that's a fact - but you don't need to consider breaking up or "taking a break" as soon as you hear that your partner is leaving. There are many factors to consider when deciding whether or not your relationship is worth holding on to. For one, how long have you and your partner been together? Have you invested months of dates, love and time together to develop a healthy relationship with long-term potential, or did your relationship just begin? If you and your partner are in a mature relationship that could lead to a permanent relationship in the future, then pursuing a long-distance relationship might be a good idea. After all, with e-mail, text and instant messaging, you can keep up-to-date with your sweetheart without nasty long-distance bills and save your money to arrange for trips to see one another. Talk to your parents, siblings, counsellors and responsible friends to see what they think. They might bring up good points to consider when you're trying to decide whether or not to stay with your partner.

**I love my partner but they have bad breath. How can I let them know nicely?**

The key to any good relationship is being able to tell your partner what and how you feel. If your partner's breath is making you so uncomfortable that it's becoming a problem, let your sweetheart know. You don't have to be rude or mean - you can even help them. Carry gum with you, the kind that tastes good and fights bacteria, and this way you can both chew gum and practise good oral hygiene together. However, if you think that your partner's breath is so bad that it could be a health concern, tell them to talk to their dentist. Bacterial infections such as gingivitis cause bad breath and need

to be taken care of by a doctor immediately. Talk to your partner and tell them what's up - so you can both breathe happy.

**My partner and I have only been together for two weeks, and I'm in love. Is it too soon to tell them this? Will I scare them away?**

Love takes time and effort to develop in a relationship. Although it is possible to really like somebody and think they are a good match for you in two weeks, it is probably too soon to love them and to tell them so. It's a good idea to wait longer and see what kind of person you are getting involved with, and to observe them in different situations so that you can see how they handle themselves. It is also important to wait in order to know how honest, trustworthy and truthful they really are. These things take time. In the meanwhile, focus on learning about each other and make sure not to forget about the other important things in your life. If you really like this person, introduce them to your friends and your parents so that people close to you can let you know what they think as well. Don't worry so much about scaring your partner away; take your time, express how you feel, but make sure to wait and see if your feelings last for awhile, before you tell your partner you love them. This way, you can make sure you really feel what you say you do.

**My partner's friend made a pass at me**

**the other day. Should I tell my partner what happened?**

First of all, I think that it is important that you take time to speak to your partner's friend who made a pass at you, and to let them know you are dating their friend - just in case they do not know. If they are aware and continue to make passes at you, ask them to stop and make sure they know it makes you feel uneasy. Speak to your partner about what happened and if their friend continues to behave disrespectfully, she/he can speak to their friend and ask them to stop. It's always a good idea to be honest and up front with your partner. It's also better for them to hear the truth about what happened to you from you rather than from someone else who may twist the story around. If your partner cares about you s/he will make sure their friend respects you and does not continue to behave so disrespectfully. Always remember to be honest, straight up, and expressive with your partner. Good communication is a must-have for any healthy and satisfying relationship.

**Should I kiss on a first date?**

You should always do only whatever you feel comfortable doing - and that doesn't change whether or not you're on a date. How you feel is just as important as how your date feels, and if you kiss on a first

date, it should be what you both want to do. If you don't want to kiss and your partner does, don't feel pressured into doing so. Let them know you are not ready yet and that you'd like to wait longer or that you don't feel the same way about them as they do about you. Remember: if you begin a relationship by allowing yourself to be pressured into pleasing someone, it may lead your partner into thinking that they can pressure you to do even more uncomfortable things down the road.



*da Flava's Sexpert*

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

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

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

## Your Ad Could Go Here!

**Do you want to spread the word about youth and community-related goods, services or events? Are you on a tight budget? Then *Catch da Flava* may be your solution!**

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(416) 863-1074**





## REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

### PARENTS FOR BETTER BEGINNINGS

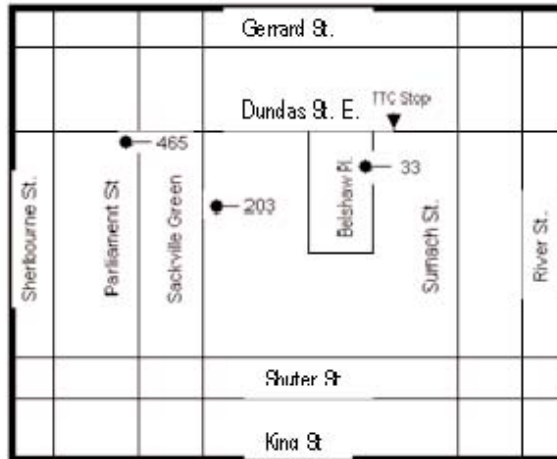
33 Belshaw Place, Toronto ON, M5A 3H6

**416-362-0805**

465 Dundas Street East, Toronto ON, M5A 2B2

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Our programs are open to all families  
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গর্ভবতী পরিবারদের এবং ছয় বছরের নিচে  
সনতানদের জন্য আমরা বিনা মূল্যে কর্মসূচি  
প্রদান করি।

காம்பனிப் பெண்கள் முதல் ஆறு  
வயது வரையிலான பிள்ளைகளைக்  
கொண்டு குடும்பங்களுக்காக வழங்கப்படும்  
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Women meet every Monday with nurses,  
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Groups are fun and women receive a weekly  
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#### EARLY YEARS NURSE

A part time Nurse is available to provide  
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Make sure your child gets their  
immunizations and regular check ups. The  
nurse is available, at 33 Belshaw Pl., 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 6 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.

#### SCHOOL READINESS GROUPS

Children three to 5 years of age attend 5 half  
days a week. Through art, music, computers,  
physical activities and outings children increase  
language, literacy, social and problem solving  
skills. We also identify and get support for special  
needs. The groups run in 3 locations.

#### FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

For parents with children newborn to 6 years of  
age. This program provides creative, fun and  
educational children's activities as well as  
parenting information and resources.

#### EARLY YEARS SOCIAL WORK & CHILD/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.

#### GROUPS FOR PARENTS & CHILDREN

Parenting is the most rewarding and challenging  
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# REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

## The African Francophone School



**D**id you know that there is a place right here in Regent Park where all children can get help with their French homework for free? Catch da Flava's Angela Musceo recently had the opportunity to interview one of the founders of the African Francophone School.

**da Flava:** What is the purpose of having this facility?

**Christan:** My name is Yambo Christan and I am from Africa. What we do here is hold an after school program for the children to come and do their homework.

**da Flava:** How did this whole thing get started? Who decided that there

should be a program here for the children in Regent Park to get help with their French studies?

**Christan:** Three years ago when I finished my masters degree, I noticed in this community that there were many children having problems with French and there was nobody there to help them. So I said now it's time for me to do something for the community, so I went to go see a man named Lucky from the Regent Park Community Centre. Lucky [Lucky Booth, Manager of RPCC] said that it wasn't a problem and that

they would give me a chance to begin my program. So I got the space in the Regent Park Centre and I started the program there in September 2002-2003, so it has been three years now

**da Flava:** Is there an age limit to be involved, what is the age range of your students?

**Christan:** Our program is just for elementary students, but if someone comes here that is not in elementary school we will refer them to the Japarhe Health Centre so they can get help there. They have a really good academic French program there for high school students. We just start in September and stop when there is a vacation

for the children, like in December. Then we start up again in January until June and now we do not have a summer program [...] but in the future if there is a need for a summer course, then maybe we will try to have one.

**da Flava:** Now is it free for all kids that want to be involved?

**Christan:** Yes, everything is free. We give them a pen, a snack and an essay book. We try to buy things for the program to help them, but everything is free for the children.

**da Flava:** If someone wanted to volunteer how could they get involved?

**Christan:** Anyone is welcome to volunteer; they just need to come down here.

**da Flava:** Do you have to speak French to volunteer here?

**Christan:** No, they don't because some of the children here go to English schools. Sometimes children who come here need help with their English homework also.

**da Flava:** Can you just quickly let everyone know where you are located?

**Christan:** We are at 583 Dundas East, so beside the security office. We are open Monday to Friday from 5pm-7pm.

### Regent Park Focus Happenings

#### Photography Classes are Back!

Learn the basics of digital and dark-room photography FREE! Mondays from 5:30pm-7:30pm, open to youth ages 13-18.

#### Catch da Flava Radio

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

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

#### Writers Wanted

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

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

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

Come join us on the last Tuesday of each month to hear from interesting and influential people. Check [www.catchdaflava.com](http://www.catchdaflava.com) for the latest updates on who will be appearing next.

#### Hip-Hop Thursdays

DJ and breakdancing workshops are returning this season on Thursdays from 5pm-8pm. You can also learn about new media and videography, two new exciting workshops FREE to youth 13-18.

#### Animation Classes

Learn to produce your own animated cartoons FREE! Saturdays 1pm-3pm for youth ages 12-15.

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

## Regent Park Peace Garden Opens



**O**n August 27, 2005, Regent Park celebrated the official opening of the Regent Park Peace Garden located at All Saints Square (Dundas St. E and Belshaw). The garden commemorates those who lost their lives at a young age. The project was initiated by the Dreamers, a group of women whose children died as a result of violence and accidents.

## Regent Park Says Goodbye to Michelle Davis



Regent Park during the past year. She worked with many groups in the community. Michelle was recently transferred by TCHC to the Don Mount and Blake-Boulton areas. Steve Yonge will take over her position.

Regent Park bids a fond farewell to Michelle Davis. Michelle was Toronto Community Housing's Community Safety Consultant for

Listen to **Catch da Flava Radio**  
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