

Catch da Flava

Summer 2003

www.catchdaflava.com

Volume 8 Issue 1

Youth and Student Newspaper Produced by the Regent Park Focus Community Coalition

Security-Youth Relations



TCHC Security Committed to Ending Discrimination

Racial profiling by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) security staff has become a fiercely debated issue among residents of Regent Park, St. Jamestown and other TCHC communities for many years. This is especially so since the harassment of three Black youth in St. Jamestown on March 5, 2000 by TCHC security officers.

This highly publicized incident occurred late one afternoon when the three youth, who were hanging out in front of a building, were surrounded by several TCHC security officers who demanded that the youth leave. Feeling that they were being discriminated against and weren't doing anything wrong, the young men refused to leave. The police were called and the youth were beaten and charged with trespassing. Despite a court ruling in favour of the victims, the TCHC denied all allegations of racial profiling by the security guards.

In response to the community's concern, TCHC commissioned the St. Stephen's Conflict Resolution Service to investigate security and youth relations in St. Jamestown. It was only when the *St. Stephen's Assessment of Security - Youth Relations in St. Jamestown (TCHC)* report confirmed the practice of racial profiling by security, did TCHC become motivated to remove and/or modify the operational practices of the security officers that allow systemic racism to occur.

Few are aware that it took TCHC nearly three years to respond to the original complaint of the harassment. This raises the question as to why TCHC was so sluggish to take action if racial profiling was a serious problem?

Murphy Browne is a resident of St. Jamestown and a community activist. She has spent the past several years trying to bring attention to the issue of racial profiling. Browne believes that TCHC should be more accountable. The problem, she says, is that residents fear losing their homes if they file a complaint against TCHC security officers.

Community activist Murphy Browne believes that TCHC should be more accountable. The problem, she says, is that residents fear losing their homes if they file a complaint against TCHC security officers.



Check out the New Sexpert Column!
Page 8



Face Off: Is FLOW 93.5 FM Selling Out?
Page 9



See Regent Park Tenant Election Candidates
Page 11

continued on page 6...

POET'S CORNER

I am Not Who I am

*I am not who I am because everyday is
a different day
Wednesday I might have a joyful day,
Tomorrow I may not
Friday the sun may shine,
like a reflection of my day
Saturday it might rain,
also reflecting on my day
Sunday I tell you one thing
Monday I tell you another
Tuesday I wear sandals
Wednesday I wear boots
All these things can never tell,
or show you who I really am
Everyday I am a bit different
If everyday I change a little bit,
it doesn't make me who I truly am
Maybe someday I will find who I am,
instead of who I am not*

**Sheryl Walker, 15,
Eastern Commerce**

LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

*"da Flava represents the diversity of
youth who live in Regent Park and
the city beyond."*

Catch da Flava is a student and community youth newspaper that is published a minimum of four times a year. The newspaper is distributed FREE to schools, libraries and community groups across downtown Toronto.

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

Catch da Flava welcomes letters and submissions from young people (up to age 24). Submissions should be no longer than 500 words in length. If you would like more information about how you can contribute to *Catch da Flava*, call us at (416) 863-1074.

NEXT DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSIONS IS:

July 18, 2003

Circulation: 10, 000

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

Published Since 1995

Editorial



After eight years of living a dull, black, white and grey print life, *Catch da Flava* is spicing up its pages by adding some colour. The hints of blue throughout the paper gives *Catch da Flava* an edge that will catch the reader's eye and, coupled with good journalism, drive the articles home and make each story a "flavaful" experience.

Our first colour issue will also introduce two new columns written by two new and committed journalists to our paper. For all you people with hungry fingers who have a thirst for knowledge, *da Flava* presents the *Between the Lines* book review column written by Kimberley Johnson. With her straight-up and in-your-face style, Johnson promises to bring you the hottest and most thought-provoking reads you can find in any bookstore or library.

If you ever wonder what diseases you can catch from kissing or had any other questions about sex, sexuality and relationships da Sexpert can help! *Catch da Flava* now has an advice column to answer all your questions about the subjects that occupy our minds for most of the day. The self-proclaimed sexpert (sex expert) will research all answers to reader's questions about sex and provide a down-to-earth approach to reader's concerns about relationships. However, the success of da Sexpert column depends on you, the reader. We encourage you to submit your questions and concerns to us by mail or e-mail.

The improvements to *da Flava* don't end here! Our editorial committee is now more energized than ever. Each member of the committee is now devoting more time and dedication to the publication and their hard work is manifested in all 12 pages of the paper. Hopefully, the energy and dedication of the newspaper staff won't let up because in the coming years there will be much to do. *Catch da Flava* is expanding its horizons - and the number of issues it will be publishing every year.

Instead of pumping out an issue each season, *Catch da Flava* will be publishing six issues a year. Here's where you, our valued reader comes in. Having colour splashed on our pages and an energized editorial committee doesn't mean much if there are no stories to put in the paper.

Everyone has a story, an experience and a voice. Unlike mainstream media, we want to hear your voice. *Catch da Flava* wants to know what you're experiencing and how you feel about it. You don't need extraordinary writing skills to submit something to *Catch da Flava*. We acknowledge that people in Toronto come from diverse backgrounds and experiences and we are more interested in reflecting this diversity. As well, our mission is to provide a forum where youth can express themselves and get their voices heard, rather than limiting people and forcing them to write in a standard form. So, just write your thoughts down, structure them into coherent paragraphs and send them our way!

Now all you old folks don't get too excited about our call for articles, that is unless you're excited about getting your children to submit one. Submissions are limited to those who are 14-24-years-old. This doesn't mean that those who are older than 24-years-old can't read our paper. We appreciate your readership and hope you enjoy our publication, but unless it is an advertisement or an announcement, you can't write for us! However, adults can support us by telling youth about our paper and encouraging them to become involved with *Catch da Flava*.

The perfect opportunity for youth to become a member of the newspaper committee is this summer. For all young journalists and those interested in expressing themselves using variety of different mediums, the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Program is for you. We offer training in radio, video, newspaper production, audio art and photography right in your backyard.

Picture this, you can learn the basics of journalism and multimedia production at no charge to you accept your time. This is an unbelievable opportunity considering that I have to pay \$5, 000 a year for four years to learn the same thing in journalism school.

Only 35 lucky youth will be able to participate in the media arts program this summer so I suggest you drop everything and run to Focus headquarters. Are you still here reading this? What are you waiting for? Apply for the media arts program now!

For more information about the media arts program call Adonis Huggins at 416-863-1074. Or, just drop by 600 Dundas St. E in the rear basement. Otherwise, enjoy the new *Catch da Flava*!

*da Flava's Editor-in-Chief
Brandi Costain*



VOLUME 8 ISSUE 1
SUMMER 2003

THE REGENT PARK FOCUS COMMUNITY COALITION (FOCUS) IS COMMITTED TO THE USE OF COMMUNITY BASED MEDIA TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND ENGAGE YOUTH.

FOCUS IS HOME TO:
CATCH DA FLAVA YOUTH AND STUDENT NEWSPAPER,
CATCH DA FLAVA ONLINE,
CATCH DA FLAVA YOUTH RADIO ON CKLN 88.1 FM,
E.Y.E. VIDEO YOUTH PRODUCTIONS,
E.Y.E VIDEO CED,
THE ZAPPAROLI STUDIO FOR PHOTOGRAPHY,
&
THE YOGA DEN

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

PROGRAM CO-ORDINATOR
ADONIS HUGGINS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
BRANDI COSTAIN

PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATOR
RIEL MOXON-EMRE

TREASURER & ADVERTISING MANAGER
EMMANUEL KEDINI

YOUTH WRITERS AND EDITORIAL STAFF
SHAHMEER ANSARI
SARAH AYERS
BO WEN CHAN
BRANDI COSTAIN
VINH DUONG
RIEL MOXON-EMRE
HILLAWAY HAILE-MICHAEL
KIMBERLEY JOHNSON

CONTRIBUTORS:
ALESHIA NIGH
SAMANTHA POWERS
SHERYL WALKER

CATCH DA FLAVA IS SPONSORED BY:
THE CENTRE FOR ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH, THE TIPPET FOUNDATION AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE.



Global Struggles



The Second Occupation

Since the end of the war, Iraq seems to have become the second Middle Eastern nation to be occupied. The Palestinian homeland being the first nation to face occupation, continues to suffer grave human rights violations by the Israeli military. The invasion of Iraq followed by the military occupation has directly affected the lives of the Iraqi citizens and has created a chaotic and unstable atmosphere, to say the least. The issues of health, true democracy and human rights seem to be neglected by the Western forces in control of Iraq as the American and British pursuit of economic gains prevail as the most important area of coalition interest.



Iraqi homes destroyed by the American and British military.

The future of Iraq remains yet to be determined. However, foreign government administrators have already acquired governing positions in the country while shady former British and American backed Iraqi exiles with little or no

credibility inside Iraq, have already begun enjoying political opportunities.

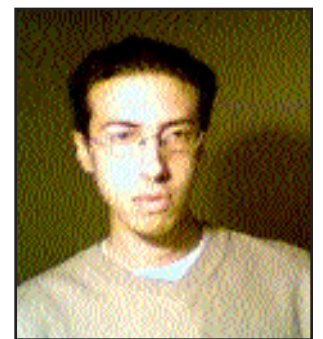
This raises the question of whether the future government of Iraq will cater to the Iraqi people or merely be a puppet of Western corporate and military interest.

Furthermore, there has been very little medical attention provided to the people of Iraq. Men, women and children are forced to suffer in an occupied nation where the British and American forces have failed to allow international health workers into the country to carry out humanitarian work which Iraqis are in desperate need of.

The potential of outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and malaria, which can spread through the damaged drainage system, threatens the lives the millions of Iraqi children. Meanwhile, hospitals are deprived of basic medicines and supplies needed to care for the wounded and sick. One should ask, why have the foreign occupying forces not taken the responsibility for its actions and continue to ignore the basic human rights

of the Iraqi people including medical treatment?

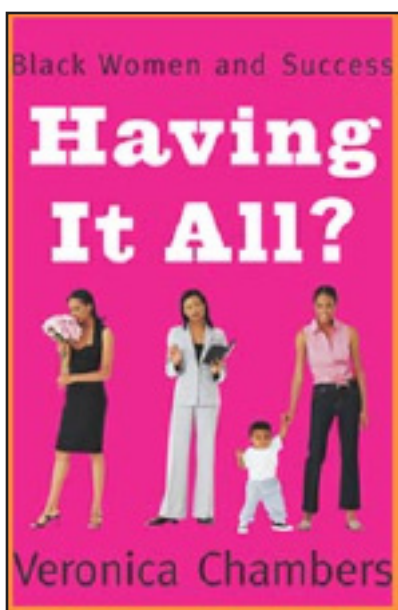
The question of whether or not Iraqis will be given the chance to choose their own democratically elected leaders without foreign interference needs to be addressed on an international scale. It is the people of Iraq and the surrounding nations who have to live in the region not the occupying forces. Therefore, the destiny of Iraq should ultimately be placed in the hands its people and should not be determined by foreign nations with economic and colonial ambitions.



da Flava's Riel Moxon-Emre, 22, Ryerson University

BETWEEN THE LINES

Book Review Corner



world is used to seeing- White women advancing in the corporate world, while successfully balancing a family and social life. Until now, Black women were trailing behind. But, as *Newsweek* reports, now Black women are at the same earning level as White women (and sometimes higher).



Veronica Chambers, author of 'Having It All?'

Black women are now at the top of their game. They take vacations to Europe and the Caribbean every year, buy brand names that they only dreamt of before, invest in the market and put money into RRSPs.

You'll find the successful sister anywhere...in church, at the top of her university class or working in the financial district.

While things are looking up, Chambers points out that while Black women are "moving on up," their brothers are behind them.

Chambers looks into the burdening issue of Black love. The interracial issue may be tired, but it is crucial when looking at studies regarding Black women. While the successful White woman has her share of equally successful White men, Black women rarely have that same luxury. The women interviewed for this book found that there are many professional, successful Black men, but not all are accessible. The question that is raised: why do Black women have to settle for second best when it comes to relationships?

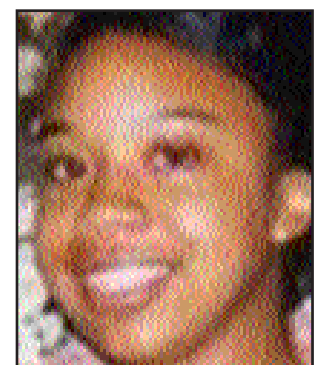
As one interviewee states: "If the Black men are with the White women, and the White men find us unattractive, what's left?"

Chambers also discusses the positive changes that have occurred in African American history. "Successful Women, Family and Responsibility" is

one chapter. The author also looks into Black women and motherhood, "The Onlys" and women of privilege across the generations.

Ending on a positive note, Chambers says that sisters are finally "going to the ball". It is time to come out of the Cinderella-slave role and take our place in this world as queens. This is a great book for sociology projects, or to raise discussion amongst Black men and women of any age.

Catch da Flava's rating (out of 5 stars): 5



da Flava's Kimberley Johnson, 22, Ryerson University

Veronica Chambers has written a groundbreaking book about the Clair Huxtables of the world (and those who are on their way to be like the Cosby show character). It has sparked debate amongst major US publications (*Essence*, *Newsweek*) and has many sisters talking about Black women and the "burden" of success.

Chambers highlights what the

Youth In Action

The self-proclaimed artist, Luwam Sebhata admits that although he has been involved in practically every aspect of the arts, he hasn't created a video, until now.

Sebhata participated in the 2003 Queer Youth Digital Video Project. In this project, he learned all aspects of video production, from scripting to filming to editing. At the end of this project, Sebhata's video, entitled *On My Way*, was premiered at the 13th annual Inside Out Gay and Lesbian Film Festival on May 24, at the Cumberland theatre.

Making a short video isn't easy and Sebhata confesses that he "encountered a lot of problems." However, in the end, he completely valued the experience.

"For me, this video was a process that I learned from," Sebhata expressed to a group of youth at a pre-screening of his video at Regent Park Focus, "now, I'm taking what I learned in this process and I will be using that to carry on to other projects and help other people with their projects."



Luwam Sebhata, creator of *On My Way*

During a discussion after the pre-screening at Regent Park Focus, it was apparent that the video was very complex and explored numerous issues in five minutes. Sebhata explained, "What hap-

pened in the process of the video, despite my message that I wanted to convey, was that I found it loaded with other things, even though I based it on this one idea, other things came out of it..."

Throughout *On My Way*, there was a theme of having pride in oneself. Connected to this, however, was the theme of homophobia. Luwam told the group at Regent Park Focus that his video is about his reality, that homophobia is always going to be there, and that "the reality is [his] safety is at risk" so he has to do what he can to ensure that he is in a safe and supportive environment and with "people that are accepting."

At the end of *On My Way*, there

is an image of a man laughing. Earlier in the video, the same man was hostile and was making homophobic statements. Sebhata explains the clip, saying that it meant "despite tension and the scrutiny, you still can't take everything too seriously. Even the guy who hates can see through it and just relax and laugh about it."

With a positive attitude, Sebhata tackled his first video creation. "I've never had a chance to create a video, and now I have." Luwam concluded the pre-screening discussion by saying that this is just the beginning, that video is "not a medium that he's never going leave" and that he is now on his way to making more videos.



da Flava's Sarah Ayers, 23

Cafe In The Park

37 Belshaw Place



Daily Combo Special:
Hamburger with French Fries
and Pop for Only \$ 5.00!



**You Wanna Make Videos?
Learn Photography? Produce Radio Shows?
Be a Newspaper Journalist?**

Register for the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Summer Training program

The program is for youth ages 13 - 22 and runs Monday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The program begins on July 2 and runs until Aug. 29

**Come to our open house on June 17
contact Adonis Huggins @ 416-863-1074**



Presents

The Media Arts Summer Program Info Session, Open House and Video Screening



Tuesday June 17

Regent Park Focus 600 East, rear basement

Open House starts at 1 p.m.

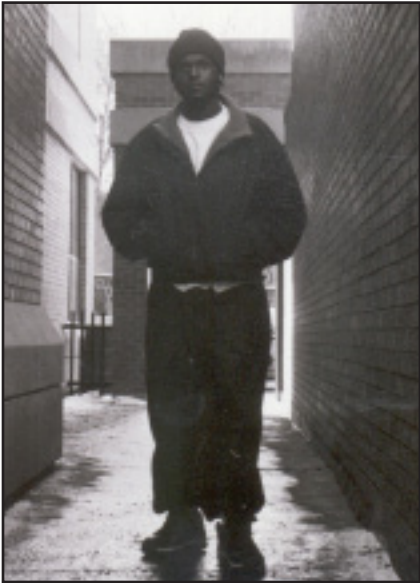
Video Screening begins at 5 p.m.

Live Radio Broadcast at 7:20 p.m.

For more info call Adonis at 416-863-1074

Ending Discrimination

...continued from cover



Hillaway Haile-Michael in Regent Park

Thankfully, the silence is gradually being broken as an increasing number of youth and TCHC personnel begin to voice their opinions on the topic of racial and systemic discrimination. Take the story of Hillaway Haile-Michael as an example of someone who isn't afraid to speak up and share their story of harassment by TCHC security.

Haile-Michael is a 20-year-old Black male who frequently visits his friends in Regent Park. One night last September around 12 a.m., Haile and his friend Patrick, was waiting on another friend outside his TCHC (formerly MTHA) apartment building. It was cold and after waiting for some time, Haile-Michael and Patrick decided to wait for their friend in the lobby of his building.

Almost immediately after entering the lobby of the building, an MTHA cruiser pulled up in front of the apartment. Then, a security officer rushed inside and asked Haile-Michael why he was there. He explained his situation, but the security guard was unsympathetic and insisted that they could not loiter there regardless of the bad weather.

As Haile-Michael and Patrick were about to exit the lobby, the officer stopped them and demanded to see identification. Following a fruitless half-hour search of Haile-Michael's non-existent criminal record, the officer dismissed him with an ambiguous warning, ordering him to make sure his friend was home the next time he decides to visit him.

Meanwhile, three other people who were in the process of leaving the premises were also accused of trespassing by another officer. The alleged trespassers were all people of colour. Until recently, Haile-Michael has been persistently harassed by security guards who threaten to write reports on him whenever he enters that apartment building, even if he is escorted up by his friend that lives there.

According to Takisha Daniels, a highschool student at Eastern Commerce and a resident of St. Jamestown, Black youths are constantly targeted and banned from buildings by security staff due to alleged accusations of disruptiveness by neighbouring tenants. One of the problems, Daniels argues, is the lack of places in St. Jamestown for youth to socialize and engage in activities.

The exact number of cases of unfair treatment by TCHC officers remains unknown because still



too many residents are afraid to speak out. It is important that the community and housing officials both know their respective rights and duties.

The Toronto Community Housing Trespass to Property's Summary of Interim Standard Operating Procedures released on Nov. 7, 2002, states that the "Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) is committed to making sure that all TCHC communities are safe and healthy, and people are treated equally and are free from discrimination and harassment. TCHC will make every effort not to involve the community members, specifically the youth population, in the justice system by using the Trespass to Property Act."

Under its guidelines, the TCHC also states that, "before deciding if a situation is serious enough for TCHC security to get involved, security staff should determine if the person's behaviour is: persistent, disruptive, anti-social, criminal and has a negative impact on community health."

Furthermore, the TCHC highlights the following points under its intervention procedures strategy: "if the individual gives security the information, and it is decided that his/her reason for being

on the property is justified, no further action is required," and, "if the person charged with trespassing leaves, no further action is required." However, once an officer has deemed an individual to be trespassing on TCHC property, he or she is required to issue a warning.

If a person feels that the TCHC has falsely accused them of trespassing, there are two main appeal procedures depending on the circumstances of the case. If a charge of trespassing has already been made, an appeal can only occur after the courts have made a ruling on the charge. If a resident wants to appeal a trespass charge on behalf of another individual, the housing manager must be notified and must meet with the resident involved, in order to determine whether or not a caution of trespass should be lifted. In all cases, the complaint process is far more efficient when the person protesting has the name and badge number of the officer.

In order to file a formal complaint, residents must fill out a complaint form and speak to their local housing manager.

It is essential that residents defend themselves against discrimination and mistreatment so that they and the TCHC can work cooperatively to create not only a safer but a more unified community.



Note: These photos of Hillaway Haile-Michael and Jamie Gardhouse were staged.



da Flava's Bo Wen Chan, 19,
University of Toronto



Regent Park Tenant Elections

Wednesday June 11

**Vote for the tenant candidate of
your choice in your riding**

Elected tenant representatives will work collaboratively with the Regent Park Resident Council, TCHC and community partners to identify opportunities and improve the lives of tenants in our community.

**For more information about the Tenant Participation System
and Elections call The TPS Election line
@ 416-981-5506**

**For more information about the Regent Park Resident Council call:
Sandra Guerra - Regent Park Council Co-ordinator
@ 416-326-3615**

See Page 11 for Candidates

"I Can't Walk on Water for You, Sir."

These were the words of police Chief Julian Fantino when he addressed a concerned citizen and teacher in the Regent Park community at our town hall meeting on Feb. 25 at Lord Dufferin Public School. The main issue of the night was racial profiling and "biased based policing" as Fantino phrased it.

Fantino stated in the meeting that "the term racial profiling is best described as biased based policing, and biased based policing is a form of discrimination and abuse of authority."

He then went on to cite all the population groups that fall under the Ontario Human Rights Code. But as one woman from the community stated, "there's one bias that the chief didn't mention and that's class bias."

This casually dressed older woman stood at one of the microphones set up to speak directly to Fantino. The woman looked Fantino in the eye and calmly explained that she was a member of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. She went on to say, "When I go out to an OCAP action, I'm looked at like a low life. I can assure you, I'm a human being."

OCAP had put up posters advertising this town hall meeting. However, OCAP was denied access to this meeting, and police officers stood outside Lord

Dufferin Public School and screened who could go inside to the meeting and who could not.

"It's well known that the police in general support the status quo and I would invite you to think a bit deeper about what the needs of society are," the woman continued.

At the meeting there was also discussion of the homeless population in Toronto, drugs, and sex workers, but most of the community discussion was spent on racial profiling.

A man by the name of Pierre Cline was the first community member to speak to the Chief on this issue.

"I think that your statement tonight in regards to the racial profiling issue and race relations issue was wholly inadequate," said Cline, "I can appreciate the officers on the street and the difficulty they have, but what I heard tonight was a circling of wagons and I don't think that's adequate, sir."

The room cheered at this statement, however, Chief Fantino immediately responded in defense of the Toronto Police Services.

"If you're suggesting that the Toronto Police Services is a racist organization, again I stand by my comment, it's not."

Fantino repeatedly stated in his speech that night, "I've never denied that there are instances of inappropriate conduct by a small number of our members who, from time to time, abuse their authority or act in a discriminatory or racist way." Fantino then added, "I remember that they're human."

When a teacher from Lord Dufferin Public School addressed the police chief on this issue, the meeting intensified. The teacher spoke about the incident that took place at the Jane-Finch town hall meeting on Jan. 7, where a 15 year-old girl confronted Fantino about racial profiling.

The young girl asked the police chief, "How come you want us to respect the police when the police don't respect us black people."

There was a lot of media coverage of the young woman's question to Fantino. However Fantino's response was even more widely displayed in the media.

"It's totally uncalled for and undeserved," said Fantino in reference to the girl's question, "and I don't think it dignifies an answer."

The teacher expressed his disappointment with Fantino.

"Your initial response was not to validate her in any way, shape, or form, but to respond very vigorously and very

aggressively in defense of the police force," said the teacher, "as an educator I was appalled at that response because you did not validate this young lady's feelings."

Fantino instantly responded by saying that on that occasion, what that young woman had said "wasn't a question. It was an indictment of the police and [he] quite clearly would reject it today as [he] outright did then."

The elementary school teacher continued, "even tonight you made comments saying that you can't understand how young people see that," referring to youth's perceptions of police profiling. "clearly, your arrogance gets in the way of that."

"Well, I can't walk on water for you, sir," was the police chief's only response.

"You don't need to," the Regent Park teacher banters back, "you just need to be respectful of young people."

And with that, the subject of racial profiling at this meeting ended.

da Flava's Sarah Ayers, 23

YES!!

Says Hillaway Haile-Michael

FLOW 93.5 FM is Canada's first Black-owned and operated radio station. Milestone Radio Inc., the parent company of FLOW 93.5, claims that "FLOW 93.5 is dedicated to giving back to the city that has shown so much support over the years." If you were to listen to FLOW 93.5 it would become obvious to you that this is a lie.

The music played on FLOW includes a mix of R&B, Rap, Reggae, Soca, Jazz and Gospel, all of which are Black or Black influenced genres of music. Milestone Radio states on its Web site that this format is "a modern-day reflection of the rich musical traditions of Black musicians." However, the fact is that FLOW chooses to play a narrow and limited selection of music that doesn't reflect the diversity of the Black community.

Moreover, what is extremely disturbing is that the music that FLOW broadcasts over the airwaves is music that propagates violence, materialism and ignorance. FLOW has thereby become an effective medium for record labels to give a very biased and misrepresented image of Black culture. Although it could be argued that FLOW doesn't choose what artists sing about, it must be acknowledged that there exists a significant number of artist such as K-OS, Diverse, Unknown Mizery, Talib Kweli, Dead Prez, Mos Def who project positive images of Black culture through their music. In my opinion, these artists do not get as much airplay as the less conscious music that degrades Black culture. FLOW claims to be for the people, but it is clearly a business designed to generate income at any cost, even the minds and lives of our children.

Racial discrimination is a big problem in Toronto, Canada and the world. As the largest vehicle for Black culture in Canada, FLOW must be held responsible for some of the negative images and stereotypes associated with Blacks in Toronto. FLOW has failed to realize that as a Black radio station it has taken on the role of an ambassador in regards to Black culture and the African-Canadian identity. By ignoring the problem and continuing to corrupt the minds of Black youth, FLOW has declared war against Black culture and all people of African descent living in this nation.

As with many wars that have taken place throughout history, it is apparent that the motive behind this attack on our culture is money. It essential that we realize that a handful of members of our community as well as major corporations are profiting from the exploitation of our culture and abuse of our people. Corporations such as Pepsi, local businesses including Jay-Dee's, are paying FLOW for advertising time. We must hold FLOW accountable for perpetuating stereotypical images of Black people.

As members of the Black community we must make sure that a handful of capitalists don't control our destiny.



da Flava's Hillaway Haile-Michael, 20

FACE OFF

Is FLOW 93.5 FM Selling Out the Black Community?



NO!!

Says Shahmeer Ansari

While there are many complaints that can be made about FLOW 93.5 FM, the relatively young Toronto radio station cannot be blamed as the sole source of misrepresenting Black culture. FLOW does often play music that glorifies violence, cheating and drug and alcohol use. However, the impression that music leaves on the mind of its listeners is just as much the artist's and the label's fault as it is the radio station's. They are also doing what any radio station would do by playing what its audience wants it to hear. As unfortunate and pathetic as it is, Ja Rule, Cash Money, Puffy, and Fabolous are some of today's most popular and most requested artists. FLOW is only doing its job by giving its listeners what they want.

Blaming Flow 93.5 for creating a stereotype of Black culture is like blaming the captain of the slave ship for slavery; while they do play a role in the problem we must

look at the root of the problem before we assign blame. And the root of the problem is, more often than not, the artists and the record labels. The labels know that violence and sex sells, so they sign artists who will rhyme about these topics. Artists are too often tempted by money (Jay-Z comes to mind) and sacrifice their art, therefore failing to keep it real. Before rap music became popular in White and suburban societies, rap music was a positive influence. Early rap offered inner-city youth an alternative to gangs and a way to speak out against injustices. Right after the success of Run DMC, however, the major record labels saw how profitable rap could be, and consequently started manipulating the game to milk it for every cent it could get. So if the music is being pumped out by artists and record labels and people demand to hear it, can FLOW really be blamed for the stereotypes people hold of Blacks?

While FLOW obviously could do much more to promote positive Black culture, it does help represent the Black music community. FLOW's on-air staff is composed almost entirely of people of colour, many of whom had previously worked for free on CKLN and CIUT FM. By offering visible minorities paid positions, they are not only helping these individuals, but are offering hope for young Black journalists. While FLOW does play an abundance of commercial music that does nothing positive for the image of Blacks, they do play artists that bring positive light to Black culture. Common, Talib Kweli, K-OS, Nas, the Roots and other "conscious" artists can be heard on FLOW. While they do not get the same amount of airplay that commercial or "sell out" artists do, this is just as much the fault of the record labels and FLOW's audience as it is Flow's.

Racism exists in our society because of a seemingly endless number of reasons: the media, the government, corporations, police, schools, ignorance, the world's history and so much more. Although FLOW does not seem dedicated to ending racism, it cannot be blamed for the existence of racism. FLOW, like most other radio stations, (CKLN and CIUT proudly being exempt) is a business, and like many business, its goal is to make money. FLOW does not claim to be CKLN or CIUT who keep it real. And FLOW's success should be used as a positive example of Black success. Had Flow only played underground music, which in my mind is far superior to the mainstream, and gone out of business after 6 months, what would that have done for the image of Black culture?

da Flava's Shahmeer Ansari, 19, HumberSide Collegiate



**Where do you stand?
Send your articles or letters and vote online @
www.catchdaflava.com
or mail to:
Regent park Focus
600 Dundas East, rear basement,
Toronto, ON M5A 2B9,**

Choice is Yours

Changing the Legal Status of Cannabis

Marijuana has become a major concern among many Canadians after 1971 when an inquiry into the non-medical use of drugs recommended that the federal government decriminalize the simple possession of marijuana. People tend to think that smoking marijuana is totally safe and has no repercussions, but that is not the case. Marijuana sits third under alcohol and cocaine as a drug for which people need rehabilitation.

However, compared to other legal drugs such as alcohol, the effects of marijuana are not that severe. Alcohol is far more physically harmful than pot and can lead to alcohol poisoning. There is no such thing as marijuana poisoning.

So the big question is why has marijuana not been legalized for personal use?

It is argued that if the government legalized marijuana, it would condone the use of the drug and therefore increase the number of users. On the other hand, a lot of people would stop using it because it would no longer be a forbidden fruit. Furthermore, since it would be government regulated, a lot of younger teens would not be able to access marijuana (legally). Since teens under 19 cannot buy alcohol, they settle for marijuana because they know drug dealers

won't ask them for identification.

Legalizing marijuana would also prevent people from associating with dealers who not only provide pot but other drugs as well. This would decrease the potential for marijuana to become a "stepping stone" drug. It is debated that people tend to start off with weed and then progress to harsher drugs. Others believe that this is not true, and that it's the users' intent to try harsher drugs regardless of whether they begin with marijuana or not. Pot only seems like a gateway drug because most people who use it also do other drugs.

A positive side of government regulated marijuana is that it would bring in a large amount of revenue for the government to spend on health care. Also, the funds that are now dedicated to policing marijuana could go to providing more education about the drug.

In the past, if one was caught with as little as a joint of marijuana, they would be slapped with a criminal offence. The lives of many teens were ruined because the majority of those charged with this offence were teenagers.

On May 27, the federal government introduced legislation that will soften the penalties for possession of marijuana.

The legislation, which the government hopes to pass into law this year, will change the status of pot. The highlights of the federal government's new marijuana bill are as follows:

1. Eliminates criminal penalties for possession of 15 grams of marijuana (enough to roll about 15 or 20 joints) or less.
2. Instead of a criminal penalty, fines will be issued of up to \$250 for youths and \$400 for adults caught with up to 15 grams of pot; tougher penalties if caught while driving or on school property.
3. Police have the discretion to give a ticket or lay a criminal charge for possession of 15-30 grams of pot.
4. For anyone caught growing:
One to three plants = Summary conviction offence (one year in jail and up to a \$5,000 fine)
-Four to 25 plants = Hybrid offence which could be treated either as a minor infraction or as a Criminal Code violation
-26 to 50 plants = Full-fledged criminal offence warranting either a maximum 1 year jail sentence
-50+ plants = Maximum 14-year sentence (which is double the current sentence)
5. The current maximum penalty for trafficking is life imprisonment, and this would remain unchanged.

The consequences of legalizing marijuana are unknown; the only way to

find out its impact is to legalize pot and monitor it. In the Netherlands, people are able to purchase marijuana in coffee shops in sums up to five grams. Countries that have decriminalized marijuana have not faced any major setbacks. Research shows that when marijuana is legalized, the use of the drug increases at the beginning but then is later reduced to prior, if not lower, levels.

Any substance that affects your emotions and your thought process should be used with care. Education about these substances is much needed and has been underfunded. Preventive measures and drug treatment should be a major health priority for the government.

People make the choice to use drugs. Telling them not to use drugs is not helpful but teaching them how to use it responsibly, is. Treatment for people who abuse marijuana should be made available, just as treatment is made available for those who abuse alcohol.

Turning a drug that is potentially beneficial to one's health into a forbidden fruit does not benefit anyone but the black market.

*da Flava's Vinh Duong, 20,
Centennial College*

From One Project to Another: Dixon Hall Girls Group Visits Chicago

April was an exciting month for Dixon Hall's Bridges to Success youth group. The all girls group went to Chicago, Illinois for what is described by them as an "unbelievable" five days that will be "treasured for a lifetime." The purpose of their trip was to meet other girls and women from a different country who also grew up in inner-city housing projects. Throughout the trip, the girls compared living in Regent Park and their experiences, to the lives and experiences of those who live in the projects of Chicago.

The trip included visiting community centres and youth groups in Chicago. One of those youth groups were the Alternatives teen girls group. The Alternatives group is very similar to the Bridges to Success youth group. Just like Bridges to Success, Alternatives provides a space where girls can go for support and to talk about issues that affect them and



Bridges to Success group members in Chicago

their community. The girls also visited different inner-city neighbourhoods. The one that hit home the most was the Cabrini-Green housing project.

Cabrini-Green is in the heart of Chicago. For those who live in Chicago, Cabrini-Green is synonymous with guns, drugs, poverty and decay. It is also happens to be an overwhelmingly Black neighbourhood and one of the poorest

communities in the US.

Furthermore, the housing project has been the target of merciless police attacks and harassment as the authorities try to drive out the residents of these projects so their buildings can be demolished, their communities destroyed and new million dollar homes can be erected.

All of this is part of a redevelopment plan that has forced nearly 10,000 people from their homes, leaving about 5,000 impoverished residents. The poor wait and wonder when they too will be forced to leave while their new neighbours, who have stock portfolios and own SUVs, move in.

Given Regent Park's stereotyped image of being a hub of crime, drugs and

moral decay as well as the fact that it is one of the poorest neighbourhoods in the GTA and is also facing redevelopment, it can be said that Regent Park is similar to Cabrini-Green in many ways. But for one young girl who went on the trip to Chicago, living in Cabrini-Green seems worse than living in Regent Park.

Aleshia Nigh is a 16-year-old Eastern Commerce student who lives in the Regent Park area. She says that visiting Cabrini-Green taught her how to appreciate life more.

"Walking through Cabrini-Green made me feel that we in Regent Park take some things for granted," says Nigh, "seeing the conditions people lived in made me very sad but I found that the kids in the neighbourhood felt good about themselves and had a high self-esteem."

continued on page 10...

Ask da Sexpert!



I'm not sure what the sore on your boyfriend's lip is. However, since you are not sure what the sore is either and you don't believe him when he says it is a pimple, then ask your boyfriend if you can go to the doctor with him. Tell your boyfriend that it would make you feel more comfortable kissing him if he got the sore checked out and that it will also benefit him as the doctor can diagnose the sore (whether it be from picking a pimple or an infection) and also treat it. The doctor can also possibly prevent it from breaking out again.

Dear Sexpert,
I love my boyfriend a lot and I enjoy kissing him but sometimes he gets a sore on his lip. He tells me that it's a pimple that he picked but I'm not sure what it is. So, when he has the sore on his lip I don't kiss him because I'm afraid it could be something contagious. What could the sore be? What diseases can I catch from kissing?

Petrified Pucker, 17, Toronto.

Dear Petrified Pucker,

If the sore on your boyfriend's lip is not a pimple then yes, it can be something contagious. However, there is also a possibility that the sore is harmless. Either way, if a sore often pops up on your boyfriend's lip, his body is telling him that something is not right and whatever it is, it should be examined by a doctor.

There are infections that can be transmitted from one person to another through kissing. Considering the sore on your boyfriend's lip, I would be concerned about the herpes virus that causes cold sores.

Herpes infections are extremely contagious when the sore is present. When someone has herpes on the mouth it looks like a blister. The blister is found either on their lips or in their mouth. So, if a doctor diagnoses your boyfriend with herpes, you should avoid kissing him when he has lesions on his lips.

Other diseases that can be caught from kissing include the common cold, the flu, Hepatitis B, Meningitis and a virus known to most as Mono or "The Kissing Disease."

For those who are wondering if they can get HIV from kissing, the answer is that there is a very miniscule risk. To understand how slim the risk is, consider that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has only documented one case of HIV transmission through kissing since the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the US which started in the late '70s, early '80s. In this case, both partners' mouths were in very bad condition. They had severe dental and gum problems, including canker sores, gingivitis, and other sores on their mouth from diseases such as oral hairy leukoplakia, and periodontitis.

I hope this answers your question. Keep in mind that the information presented in this article should not be substituted for seeking professional help. If anyone does have the symptoms listed, they are advised to see a doctor.

If you need any further information on sex, book an appointment with your doctor. If you live in the Regent Park area, you can call the Regent Park

Community Health Centre at: 416-364-2261.

You can also call:

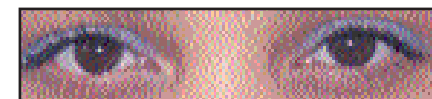
The Teen Sex Infoline for counseling for teens by teens at (416) 961-3200, seven days a week from 4 p.m. - 10 p.m. Or, visit their Web site: www.spiderbytes.ca.

Toronto Public Health's "Talk it UP" AIDS and sexual health infoline: 1-800-668-2437.

Or visit the following Web sites:

Planned Parenthood of Toronto: <http://www.ppt.on.ca/house.html>

Sexuality and You: www.sexualityandu.ca



da Flava's Sexpert

Da Sexpert will be offering advice in every issue of Catch da Flava from now on. So, if you have any questions or concerns about ANYTHING to do with sex, sexuality or relationships, e-mail them to: catchmail@catchdaflava.com or, send them to Catch da Flava, 600 Dundas St. E. Toronto ON, M5A 2B9. Da Sexpert will find the information you request and will be the only link you need to information on sex!

...continued from page 9

When the young ladies visited Cabrini-Green, they had to be escorted into the project to ensure their safety. The conditions that Cabrini-Green residents live in include being surrounded by vacant, littered lots. According to one of the ladies who went on the trip, "there appeared to be a lot of fire damage to the houses and buildings." The lobbies of the apartment buildings are scrawled with graffiti and have no lights. The houses, apartments and school buildings have been neglected for years and are crumbling; however the girls group found that the spirit of the young people in the neighbourhood was strong and intact.

"When the youth in Cabrini-Green saw us, their hearts filled with joy," says Samantha Powers, a 14-year-old student at Weston C.I. who has lived in



Hanging out with Wenona (second from left) in Chicago.

Regent Park for most of her life. "They gave us so much love and made us laugh. Their encouraging words meant everything to me."

Besides visiting youth groups and neighbourhoods, the highlight for a lot of the girls in the group was meeting a woman named Wenona and hearing her story. Wenona grew up in a Chicago

housing project. Being poor and without any guidance and support network, a teenage Wenona turned to drug dealing as a means to support herself. She was eventually caught and she spent almost three years in jail. While in jail, Wenona found the courage she needed to turn her life around. She is now 28-years-old and a mother of two. Wenona is also a mentor and a counsellor for a group called Girl Talk. Wenona's lifelong goal is to reach out to young women, hoping they will learn from her mistakes.

The stay in Chicago for the Bridges to Success youth group may have been short but according to Sandra Costain, the co-ordinator of the girls group, the young ladies learned a lesson that will last a lifetime.

"The girls got a reality check," says Costain, "they saw so much of Regent Park in Cabrini-Green but they

realized they have much more support here. The trip helped them to value what they have and to understand that life is about choices; that you may be born into certain circumstances but you have the power to change them."

The future plans for the group include building a relationship with the youth they met at Alternatives by keeping in touch and taking an annual trip to Chicago. They also plan on having an exchange program so youth from Chicago can come to Toronto and share empowering ideas as well as experience the life and spirit of Regent Park.

The Bridges to Success program welcomes new participants. For more information about the program, call 416-360-1308 or drop by 16 Blevins Place between 1 p.m.- 9 p.m.

da Flava's Brandi Costain, 20, Ryerson University

Regent Park Tenant Election Candidates



Abdullahi Mohamed Abdirahman (R-5)



Agathe Kabeya (R-7)



Amina Ware (R-7)



Annie Kebede (R-5)



Azizul Hoque (R-5)



Ba Toan Tran (R-5)



Deqa Goraad (R-7)



Diane MacLean (R-7)



Doug Rice (R-3)



Fadumo Ali (R-7)



Fadumo Moalin (R-5)



Faroque Khan (R-8)



Guadalupe Fuentes (R-6)



Humayun Kobi (R-2)



Kazi Mohammed Jalaluddin (R-2)



Khan Ramzan (R-3)



M. Alamgir Alam (R-4)



Marian Amin (R-7)



Mohamed Abdi (R-3)



Mohammad Asad Uddin (R-6)



Mohammad Uddin (R-9)



Mohammed Abdus Salam (R-7)



Muttiah Yogendren (R-5)



Robert Lutala (R-5)



Salehuddin Ahmed (R-1)



Seevaratnam Vallipuram (R-4)



Sellathurai Navaratnarasa (R-1)



Siddique Rahman Akon (R-2)



Visvalingam Thamu (R-2)

R = Riding

**Election Day
Wednesday June 11**

REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

TWO AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS IN REGENT PARK



L-R: Focus' Adonis Huggins and Vinh Duong, City Councillor Pam McConnell, senior vice-president of Bell Canada, Focus' Emmanuel Kedini, Councillor Brad Dugid.



Pathways to Education representatives receive the Kroeger Award in Ottawa last year.

Regent Park Focus, home to *Catch da Flava* newspaper and *E.Y.E Video Youth Productions*, won this year's Mayor's Community Safety Award in Youth Violence Prevention.

The award recognizes the contributions of individuals and groups that have worked to make Toronto's communities safer.

By providing a supportive and positive environment, Regent Park Focus keeps youth busy by giving them an opportunity to learn new skills and express their creativity through multi-media production.

The programs at Regent Park Focus also give young people in the community a sense of belonging. It also allows youth to meet professionals in the media field and gives them the tools they need to empower themselves and examine issues that affect them.

Regent Park Focus believes that providing youth with critical media arts skills (radio, video and newspaper

production) will enable them to identify and address some of the factors that contribute to youth violence and other issues. For instance this past summer, The Regent Park Focus Media Arts Program used their video, *Last Witness* to stimulate discussion and analyze some of the factors that perpetuate violence in the Black community. The video was also used to facilitate many youth violence conferences throughout the GTA.

The media training provided at Regent Park Focus also gives young people the chance to control the medium and the message that society digests and enables the young producers to determine how they are represented in the media. *Catch da Flava* (print, radio and online) provides the venue for this through wide distribution, airwaves and the World Wide Web.

Regent Park Focus guarantees to deliver more self-empowering and motivational media through their media arts summer program. Keep up the good work!

Did you know that the Regent Park Community Health Centre's Pathways to Education Program won the prestigious Kroeger College Award in Citizenship and Community Affairs in 2002?

The award, established by Carleton University's Arthur Kroeger College, recognizes the achievements of Canadian leaders. According to Kroeger College, "the award is given to an organization or individual that has shown creativity, persistence and overall leadership in demonstrating the value of locally based initiatives dealing effectively with a problem or challenge and whose research or activities have expanded understanding and awareness of the importance of good citizenship and community."

The Pathways to Education Program has been awarded for their creativity in creating a community initiative that aims to break the cycle of poverty by helping youth attain a highschool and post-secondary education.

The Pathways to Education Program provides

each Grade 9 student with a mentor, tutors as required, bus fare, and a post-secondary education fund of \$2,000 per child.

All the mentors and tutors in the program are volunteers. Pathways is always looking for volunteer mentors and tutors for their program, especially considering that the number of students for next year is approaching 400.

Those who are interested in being a volunteer mentor or tutor must be able to commit two hours a week during the school year. For more information on the Pathways program call, 416-364-2261.

On behalf of the Regent Park Community Health Centre, many thanks to Pathways to Education staff, students and families involved in the program.

Congratulations to the Pathways to Education Program!

Open Door Centre Forced to Relocate



After 31 years of operation in the All Saints' Church-Community Centre at the corner of Sherbourne and Dundas Streets, the Open Door Centre was forced to close down on May 31.

The Open Door Centre was Toronto's largest drop-in centre for the homeless. According to their

farewell statement, the drop-in centre had no choice but to shut its doors as their space usage agreement with the All Saints' Church had been terminated.

The landlord, All Saints Church-Community Centre, issued a non-negotiable eviction notice to the Open Door Centre on Dec. 11, 2002.

The landlord plans to continue the operation of a day shelter service for the homeless.

The Open Door Centre will continue to operate its Rooms Registry Program and Asset Mapping Research Project from the Toronto Christian Resource Centre at 40 Oak Street. For more info contact Enrique Robert, Executive Director, at (416) 366-7124.

Community Bulletin Board

Regent Park Tenant Elections June 11, 2003

Vote for the tenant candidate of your choice in your riding. Call: 416-981-5506 or 416-326-3615

JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH!

Community Organizing Assistant to co-ordinate events.
Call: 416-363-4234 ext. 222
by June 16.

Regent Park FOCUS Open House June 17

1 p.m. Open House
5 p.m. Video Screening
7:20 p.m. Live Radio Show
call: 416-863-1074

Check out more community events online at:

www.catchdaflava.com

Have an event coming up in the Regent Park area? Post your events here!!!

Call Adonis at 416-863-1074 or fax them: 416-863-9440

Reaching Out Program:

The Reaching Out Program is an inter-agency collaboration designed to assist young people 16-24, who engage in high risk activity and are in need of support.

Workshops include: Computer training, Video production, Photography, Audio Arts, Employment Workshop, Life Skills Workshop, Leadership Training, School/Employment/Career Planning

For more info contact Lana @ 416-925-4363 ext. 149