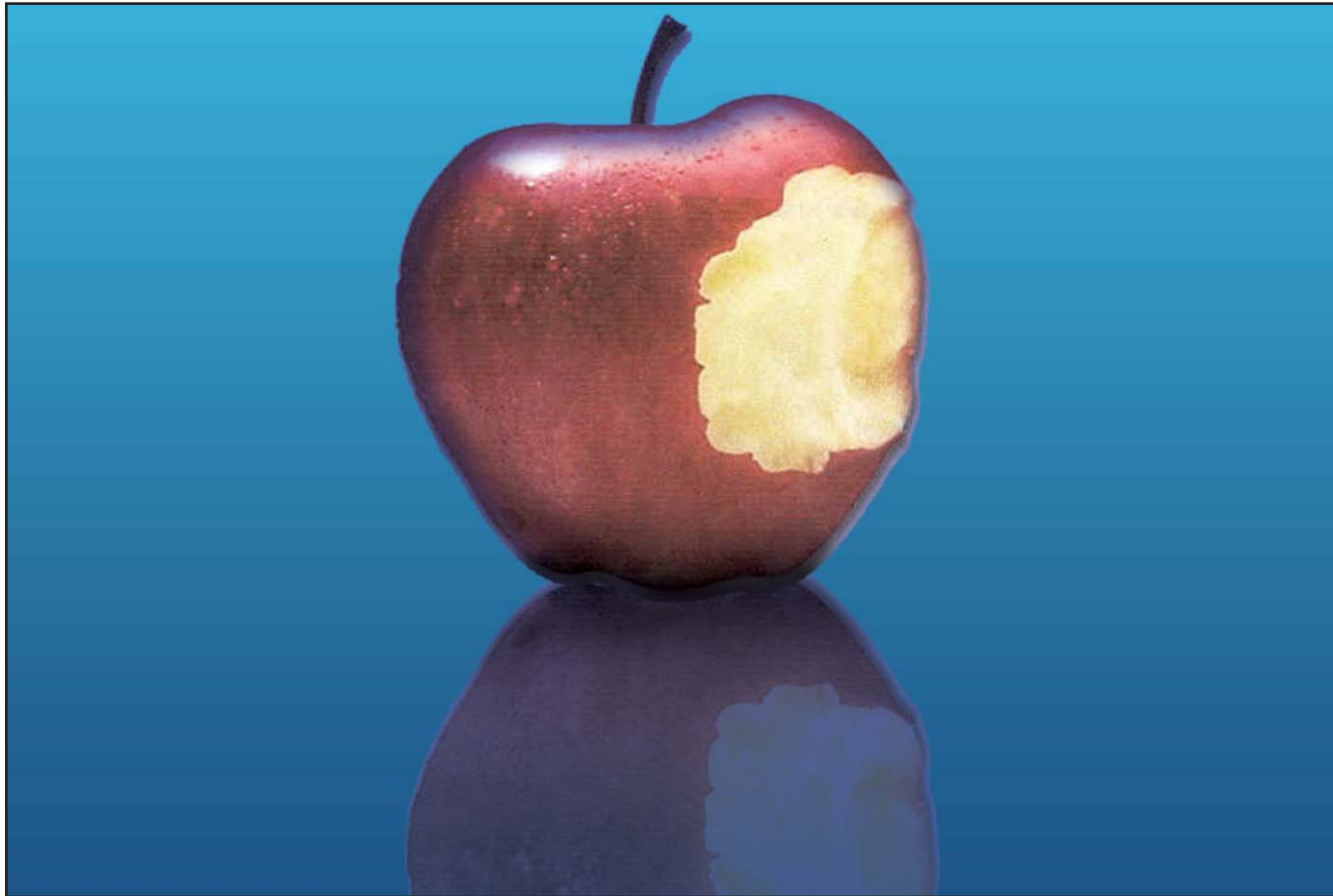


Class is in Session



The Authoritative Guide to School Success

Let's face it, school is just plain hell! And middle school is hell plus pimples. Because I can no longer stand idly and watch the suffering of thousands of innocent middle school children, I have decided to breach my teacher ethics and the code of sworn secrecy and give you the real deal about the sinister life behind closed middle school doors.

If my principal or any strange glasses-wearing, trench coat-clad, box-cut-haired person is seen at my house carting me off to the detention station, don't rat me out ol' buddy, ol' pal. If they decide to keep me forever, remember me with fond memories and if it's not too much to ask, send me some clean underwear and a couple of *Crunchie* bars.

This part is cheesy but absolutely true. Don't have a laughing fit or grimace and cause your face to contort into a grotesque mask that won't return to its natural state. My life is on the line for blabbing here, so respect that.

Rule #1: Organization is the key to success.

Alright, I said it. I have had hundreds of kids go through that scuff-marked door of mine (if you are a little slow on the draw, it's scuff-marked because the kids kick the door when I'm not around and it's not because they want in) and I know what I'm talking about. None of my students lacked the ability to pass the curriculum. Well, one or two or a handful were really rowing with one oar, not playin' with a full deck or goin' for a pleasure dip in the shark tank at the zoo.

But if students had spent half the time it takes to make their hair perfect, pull their pants to their ankles (while not showing any part of their briefs), talk to some dimwit on MSN messenger etc. to put their papers into the correct section of their binder, they could have done well.

And that reminds me about paper. During your time at middle school, you will begin to wonder if there are any trees left in that grand province of B.C. or a single tree standing in the Brazilian Amazon.

Continued on page 6...

Are you planning to work while in school? Don't get stressed out! Bo Wen Chan explores balancing school and work on page 3.

Want an alternative to traditional schooling? Tyrone MacLean-Wilson interviews students attending alternative schools in the GTA. Check out page 7.



Genocide in Sudan's Darfur Region
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Making Blackburn History
Page 7



da Sexpert: Art of Online Dating
Page 8

POET'S CORNER

Life is Like a Game

*Life is like a game,
Only it's not.
If you don't pay attention to details,
You could get shot.
Maybe by gangsters,
Maybe by cons.
It's kind of like a magic trick;
'Poof' and you're gone.
Just pull a trigger
Towards your head.
One gory blast,
And you'll end up dead.
They say that's life
In the 'Ghetto,'
And in the 'Hood.'
That's how it should be--
Believe it if you would.
But what do they know?
Those aren't the right words.
Do what is right
And you won't live the curse.
That's it for now;
My words have been said.
Live life safe, boys and girls,
So you won't end up lying
In a hospital bed.*

Diana T.

LET CATCH DA FLAVA BE YOUR VOICE

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

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

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

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and clarification.

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Guest Editorial



Have you ever wondered how many people in the world are successful without an education and more specifically, a post-secondary education? Well, there might be a few, but most people don't have that kind of luck. I personally believe that acquiring an education is one of the most important things in life, for this is a great achievement that no one will ever be able to steal from you. Having an education is what will take you places in this rapidly evolving world. Recently a lady came to my school and told us about the importance of obtaining a college diploma or university degree. She also told us that more than half of the jobs on the market require some sort of post-secondary education?

Dropping out of school is not a new phenomenon; it happens daily in most schools. Many teens are more interested in playing basketball or other sports than doing their school work however, you have

Letter to the Editor

I'd like to comment on the article that was written by Fénide Hérard about Haiti.

The article was probably the most informative that I have read in months regarding global politics. I was greatly impressed by the writers ability to present the information clearly and, thereby, making the message hit home.

The article certainly supports the evidence of the right wing agenda in North America. That agenda being to discredit and destabilize any government that is progressive in regards to human rights or the rights of the individual in the face of corporate domination.

Because Aristide had the moral conviction to seek to improve the situation for the citizens of Haiti, the paranoid American right wing saw fit to destabilize

to be a well-rounded student in school. That means participating in community services, being a good team player and most of all having an impressive grade point average in order to participate in sports teams and other extracurricular activities.

Some young people are interested in the hustling life. With this lifestyle, they might be able to get lots of money and buy that escalade, or the "bling bling," or the designer clothes but when they really search deep within their heart, they aren't always happy with the life they are living. Some teenagers go to school, but never attend lessons. They are seen in the hallways or at the nearest fast food restaurant. How is spending your time and in the hallways with your friends or somewhere on the school grounds going to help you achieve your goals? All of us are capable of attaining our dreams as long as we put our mind to it. My motto in my life has always been, "never give up." We all fail and stumble at some point in our lives, however this should not stop us from doing the right thing and trying to make a decent life for ourselves, our loved ones and the communities we live in.

I know you might say, "yea, yea, yea...we've heard that before," but I urge my fellow teenagers out there to start taking your education seriously and I promise you will not be disappointed. Having that degree or diploma will come very handy some time in the near future. So get started, take that first step, decide what you'd like to do with your life, and most importantly finish your education.

*Submitted to CDF by:
Virginia Kanyogonya, 19*

his government by introducing a civil war. This pattern has been occurring throughout the so called Third World since the Cold War began and probably before. It seems that whenever, there is a world leader who seeks to improve the plight of his or her citizens, the corporations, proped up by North American right wing fanatics, equate these humanitarian objectives with the "evil" empire of encroaching communism.

In other words, these corporations see the potential of their profits being threatened by increasing the wages of the workers that they prefer to exploit to ensure that they will stay hungry and desperate.

Thanks again for the article and I hope that *Catch da Flava* keeps doing what the mainstream press usually doesn't: shine the light where it needs to shine!

David Zapparoli



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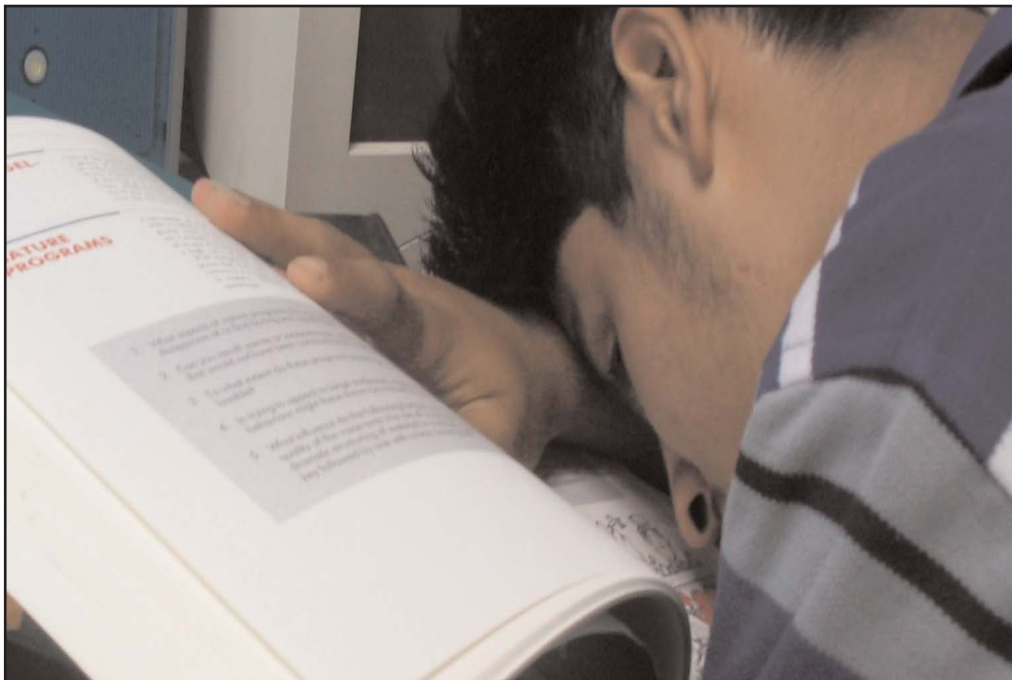
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Work and School: Too Much to Handle?

To the average student, living can seem pretty costly. A visit to the neighbourhood coffee shop can cost \$10 and going to the movies can be nearly twice that price. It's no wonder that about three out of four high school students are employed part-time to cover those out-of-pocket expenses that a healthy social life may incur, and that parents may be unwilling to pay for. But is all this extra labour short-changing young people's futures? Is it causing teens to perform poorly in school and thus hindering their chances of entering post-secondary programs which could lead to higher paying, more secure jobs?

In multiple studies that have been conducted across Canada and the United States, the conclusion is the same: working 15 hours a week or less while attending school is generally beneficial to students. However, working over 15 hours--especially in excess of 20 hours a week--is correlated with lower grades, higher dropout rates and increased alcohol consumption. While these findings are significant, it is hard to determine whether overlong work hours cause deteriorated school performance, or whether those who do poorly in school take on longer work hours. Perhaps some other factor, such as stress or poverty, causes both.

So what exactly should teens do if they want to make money without jeop-



ardizing their education? Well it's obvious: work 15 hour a week or less. Not only does this allow students to gain social skills and help them get full-time jobs upon graduation, but it is also associated with better performance in school and lower dropout rates.

Still, there are a few things to bear in mind before rushing resumes to every hiring organization in sight. Although the quantity of work a student performs affects their academic life, the quality of a job matters just as much. Nowadays, the majority of employment opportunities available to teens are entry-level, low-paying retail, marketing and

general labour jobs. These types of work often require minimal skill and training, and offer limited pathways to advancement. Instead of gaining social and organizational skills, students find themselves in an environment where people lie, steal and begrudge the world. This can not only foster bad work habits, but also a negative outlook on life.

Another pitfall for the working student is the effect of misleading affluence. Many young people decide that the piddling wages they earn in their first jobs can bring them independence. They do not realize that just because they can now afford to eat out and buy clothes, it




does not mean they can skimp on schooling which could help them purchase a house, pay bills and achieve real autonomy. Misleading affluence can be one of the main reasons a student decides to increase work hours, trading future financial stability for immediate monetary rewards.

For those teens who are forced to work over 20 hours weekly due to financial duress or other obligations, the only way for many of them to maintain superior grades is to take fewer courses or talk to their teachers about their extenuating circumstances to see if their situations can be accommodated. Working extensive hours does not mean that a student is academically doomed, it just means that they need to devote a little added effort to manage their time.



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

1 standard drink = 13.6 grams of alcohol =

wine	or	spirits	or	beer
				
5 oz/142 mL of wine (12% alcohol)		1.5 oz/43 mL of spirits (40% alcohol)		12 oz/341 mL of regular strength beer (5% alcohol)

Higher alcohol beers and coolers have more alcohol than one standard drink.

Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines

0	Zero drinks = lowest risk of an alcohol-related problem
2	No more than 2 standard drinks on any one day
9	Women: up to 9 standard drinks a week
14	Men: up to 14 standard drinks a week

Global Struggles

Slow Motion Genocide

There is a genocide happening in slow motion in my mother country of Sudan and the rest of world is doing nothing to stop it. Women are being raped and children are being slaughtered like cattle while the rest of the world talks about peace.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. It is ruled by an Arab military government lead by President General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who took power with a military coup in 1989. Sudan has been locked in a civil war between the Islamic government in the north and the dominantly Non-Arab Christian people in the south for over 50 years. But for the past 16 months, a militia group working for the Sudanese government has been burning villages and killing the non-Arab Black Muslims that live in the Western region Darfur in Sudan. This is what you call "ethnic cleansing," the systematic elimination of an ethnic group or groups from a region



Refugees in Sudan

or society, by deportation, forced emigration, or genocide.

There are more than one million people who have been displaced in Darfur and at least 200,000 that have fled to

neighboring Chad. Humanitarian groups are shocked at how the government of Sudan treats its own people and refuses to stop the killings. It seems as if the more these non-government organizations sit and talk about what's happening in

Sudan, the higher the number of dead people climbs. Less talk and more action is needed.

This is a real genocide but the United Nations is refusing to classify it as such. The reason for this is because the United Nations does not want to send military forces to the region of Darfur. Canada's commitment to the cause is minimal, even though the Canadian government is committed to bringing peace and humanitarian help to the thousands of people who are being innocently massacred across the globe. Darfur needs strong military aid, nothing more and nothing less.



da Flava's Emmanuel Kedini, 23

Venezuela: Viva La Revolution



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez

In 1998, Hugo Chavez was elected President of Venezuela with shouts of victory.

Venezuela is a country located in South America and is the fourth largest exporter of oil in the world. Despite the country's wealth, there is a great disparity between the rich and the poor. In 1989, the Venezuela State Office of Information reported that 8 million people, roughly 40 per cent of Venezuelans were living in

poverty or extreme poverty.

In December 1998, Hugo Chavez, a left-wing populist running on an anti-poverty platform, won the allegiance of Venezuela's impoverished majority, and was elected President of Venezuela by the largest percentage of voters in four decades. Chavez supporters won 120 of the 131 seats of the national assembly that forms the government.

Almost immediately, Chavez embarked on a series of sweeping changes that would help improve the health and literacy conditions in Venezuela and lead to the redistribution of wealth to the poor. For example, Chavez implemented land and food redistribution programs, raised the minimum wage by 20 per cent, and in exchange for Venezuelan oil, negotiated a deal with Fidel Castro to send Cuban trained doctors, teachers and other professionals to work with Venezuelan poor.

From the beginning, Chavez was opposed by Venezuelan business and media elites who were threatened by the new government's priorities to restructure the oil industry and address the needs of the poor. On April 12, 2002, the opposition carried out a surprised military coup and arrested Hugo Chavez. The constitution of Venezuela was suspended and a businessman named Pedro Carmona was installed as president. It was later announced that Chavez had resigned. This event generated a widespread uprising of Venezuelans, resulting in the collapse of the coup within hours of Chavez's arrest. Chavez and his supporters have

repeatedly stated that the Bush administration and the CIA orchestrated the coup.

Having failed to get rid of President Hugo Chavez by a military coup, the opposition organized a recall referendum (vote) campaign. If successful, President Chavez would have to resign. The recall vote was held on August 24, 2004. Despite the opposition's ownership and dominance of Venezuelan media, Hugo Chavez supporters won 60 per cent of the votes.

The failed referendum marks another important step for President Hugo Chavez and Venezuela's march to justice.



da Flava's Fénide Hérard, 21

Global Struggles

The Occupation of East Turkistan: The Palestine of the East



As the international community witnesses the invasion and foreign rule of numerous countries and territories in the name of the 'War on Terror' and 'national security,' one nation under occupation has failed to gain significant attention from the mainstream media. This land is the nation of East Turkistan, a territory facing occupation by the People's Republic of China.

The geographical area encompassing East Turkistan, which is termed 'Xinjiang' by the Chinese government meaning "new territory" in Chinese, is home to over 10 million native Muslim inhabitants named the Uyghur. The Uyghurs are a Turkic speaking Muslim people who have a rich and distinct culture, language, and history unrelated to and separate from the Han Chinese of China. The Uyghur are ethnically, linguistically, and culturally directly related to the peoples of Turkic Muslim countries including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan. East Turkistan lies outside the Great Wall of China, which has traditionally been the boundaries of Chinese territory. The names of cities and villages in East Turk-

istan such as Kashgar, Urumqi, and Turpan consist of Turkic names not Chinese ones.

"Using the post-September 11 global 'war on terror' to justify the maltreatment of Uyghurs, China has banned various religious practices and activities during the Holy month of Ramadan"

The occupied territories of East Turkistan were once called The Islamic Uyghur Kingdom of East Turkistan which had historically maintained its independence and prospered culturally and economically until 1876 when the Manchu Empire invaded and after eight years of war annexed East Turkistan renaming it 'Xinjiang' in 1884. East Turkistan also briefly had its independence from 1944-1949 and was known as the East Turkistan Republic. Since 1949, China has been exercising colonial rule over the indigenous Turkic Muslim Uyghur people who have since have been suffering cultural and religious persecution.

Uyghurs today are imprisoned, tortured, and even executed simply for practising their Islamic faith or for flying their blue crescent and star flag. The human rights organization Amnesty International has done extensive documentation concerning the human rights violations conducted against of the Uyghur people. In a July 2004 report entitled *The People's Republic of China: Uyghurs fleeing persecution as China wages its "War on Terror"*, Amnesty International highlights how the Chinese government has used the global 'War on Terror' as a pretext to further clamp down on all forms Uyghur cultural and religious expression and falsely label Uyghurs who practice their faith and cultural traditions as "terrorists" and "religious extremists." Using the post-September 11 global 'War on Terror' to justify the maltreatment of Uyghurs, China has banned various religious practices and activities during the Holy month of Ramadan. Furthermore Amnesty mentions the Chinese government is "...closing many mosques and independent religious schools, increasing official controls over the Islamic clergy, and detaining or arresting religious leaders deemed to be "unpatriotic" or "subversive"."

Not only have the religious practices of Uyghurs been attacked by China, but the basic cultural and linguistic rights of Uyghurs have also been denied. According to Amnesty International in January 2003, a young Uyghur poet was imprisoned for simply reciting verses of poetry at a cultural gathering in city of Kashgar. The banning of books pertaining to the history and culture of Uyghurs have been destroyed and reportedly burnt as well as the banning on instruction of the Uyghur language in local schools and universities. Uyghur exile groups with family contacts in the East Turkistan region reported information about the detention of approximately 5,000 Uyghurs attending "unofficial Islamic activities" followed by the an execution of approximately 150 Uyghurs during the April to August time period in 2002.

"...in the last few years Uyghur families have been forced off their land by Chinese settlers without being consulted or given any form of compensation...."

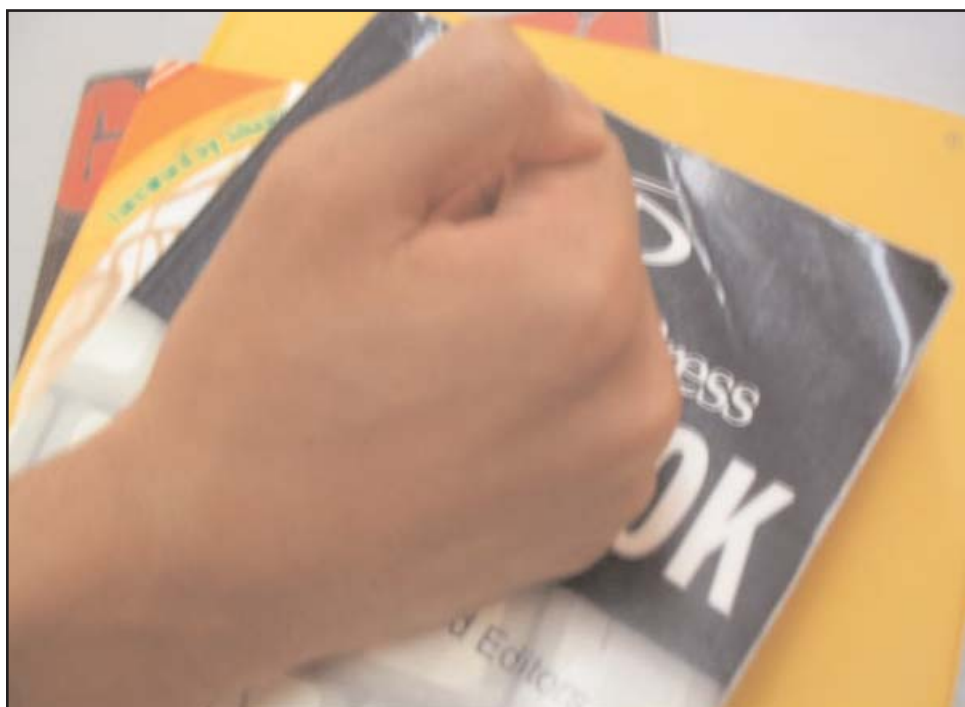
The Uyghur people of East Turkistan have also suffered from poverty and socio-economic deprivation as the Chinese government continues to encourage the migration of Han Chinese onto Muslim Uyghur land. Uyghurs face high unemployment and are discriminated against in the labour market as they are not given equal work opportunities due to their Turkic Uyghur language. Amnesty states that, "The vast majority of Uyghurs are farmers; they are not proficient in Chinese and have limited educational and employment opportunities." The Amnesty report goes on to say that in the last few years Uyghur families have been forced off their land by Chinese settlers without being consulted or given any form of compensation, similar to the occupation of Palestine.

With numerous nations facing occupation globally, the Uyghur people of East Turkistan should not be forgotten, as the international community should recognize their right to self-determination and independence. Ultimately, East Turkistan should be given the same amount of worldwide media attention and coverage that other nations receive today.

Submitted to Catch da Flava by S.A.



Class is in Session



...Continued from cover

Paper will fly at you from every direction: to your right in math, to your left in history, in front of your face in English and even from behind you in the washroom stall.

Due to the overwhelming volume of paper you will receive, you must learn how to deal with it. You know exactly how to deal with paper when you're on the toilet, so learn to step-up your efforts and deal with the not-so-smelly stuff. I'm going to break it down for you now, so pay attention.

"Every kid's nightmare: the teacher with his glasses half falling off his face because he is so deeply engrossed in his lesson about the different types of rivers found in the Western Hemisphere."

As soon as Mr. What's-His-Name or Ms. So-and-So gives you a piece of paper, put it into your binder in the proper section right away! Make sure that if it's geography, it goes in the geography section, if it's health, it goes in the health section, if

it's math, it goes in the math section and so on.

WARNING -- Don't attempt what many before have tried to do and failed. Do not shove it into your textbook at the page you were just working on, or stick it anywhere inside your binder, or worst of all, stash it into your desk.



If you are looking for even more of a paper challenge, try these on for size. Your teachers will eat it up, trust me.

Use a table of contents and make a title page for each subject. Do this even if you are not asked to. If you think that your teacher might show their friends in the staff room your stick people drawings and have fits of laughter at your expense, you can create it on the computer.

Each week take your binder home and spend 15 minutes organizing it. Put the stuff you don't need anymore in the recycling bin and make sure everything else is in its place. Parents love this, just let them see you smiling and shuffling papers over a binder -- more brownie points for you!

"Get over it, they have a paying job and you don't at the moment. Unless the teacher tries to lock you in the boiler room or attempts to throw you from the highest point of the building to your death, you are stuck with him or her until June. No sense in losing sleep or your grades over it."

There are middle school kids out there who are stunned at the reason for their dismal grades, I have unlocked secret numero uno for you. In the middle school classroom, organized individuals basically have a head start over their unorganized brothers and sisters.

Rule #2: Concentrate in class.

Every kid's nightmare: the teacher with his glasses half falling off his face because he is so deeply engrossed in his lesson about the different types of rivers found in the Western Hemisphere. As in life, you will encounter people who you enjoy listening to and others that you would rather see being made into pavement by a steam-

roller.

Get over it, they have a paying job and you don't at the moment. Unless the teacher tries to lock you in the boiler room or attempts to throw you from the highest point of the building to your death, you are stuck with him or her until June. No sense in losing sleep or your grades over it. If it is any consolation, we all work with people that give us hives whenever they walk into the room. Why do you think seminars on people skills make millions of dollars each and every year?

I know concentrating is hard, especially when you've got that high-strung kid running all over the room shrieking, "You suck, You suck!" Or the girl beside you is passing a note that has her boyfriend's name on it or you are dying for any kind of snack because holy crap, these classes are soooooo long and you've just got to eat something right now because the snot and hard gum on your desk is starting to look appetizing.

But there is a positive point to be made here, so don't dismay. If you would prefer to keep the homework thing to a minimum, concentrating in class is your best strategy. If you understand what the teacher said, have a worksheet that is complete and remember the activity you did on the subject, study time is virtually eliminated! So hooray for concentrating in class! That was secret numero dos.

The only thing you will have to do at home are assignments and this leads me to my final word of wisdom for you on the perils of middle school success.

Rule #3: Hand in all of your assignments.

More than anything you must understand a teacher cannot give you a mark if there is nothing to mark.. Catch my drift? Many kids I have taught have not figured this one out yet. They are still scratching their heads in disbelief.

Student: "But, Ms. Ricketts, I can read! How could I get 26 per cent in that strand of English?"

Me: "Hello, wake up and smell the Eggs Benedict. Yes, you may very well have the ability to read, but did you submit your poster assignment on the main theme of Captain Underpants? Did you complete your Book Talk on the sad and unhappy tales of the Baudelaire orphans?"

Student: "Um, well, aaah..."

Continued on page 7.

Back to School 2004

...Continued from page 6

Me: "The answer to these questions are, NO! A very big fat, NO! So yes, you may have the ability to read you snivelling adolescent pile of drivel, but let me ask you this: have you proven it to me? Do I have any recollection of you placing your assignment on my desk or you completing the presentation? Frankly, I may have three heads, toes that curl in my shoes and a wart on the tip of my nose, but I know for certain you have not handed in a bloody thing."

I storm out of the class to have

my 23rd mental break down of the year, but not before I call the student's parents. The student calls me a couple of choice names (in his or her head of course) and goes home to #1 apologize to dear ol' mom and dad and #2 start working on their late assignments.

I encourage you to not make the above story become reality for you. It is a painfully agonizing ordeal that is better left to your time in university. The professor can't call your parents because they aren't allowed to and plus they'll be too busy hooping it up with all their guy and

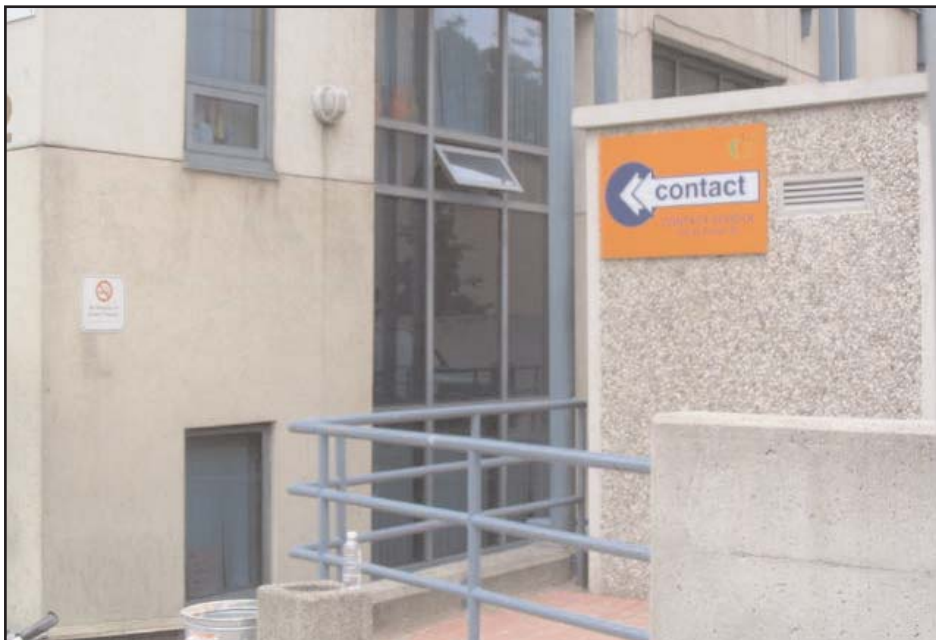
gal pals in the swanky prof's lounge.

Secret # 3: Getting a failing grade is actually better than getting no grade at all on an assignment. All of your grades will be averaged together for the final mark in each strand and subject area. A failing grade has an excellent chance of being bumped up to a pass on a report card because the other passing marks will help it. However, this will not work if you receive a fail on the majority of your assignments. I have never seen a student do this; they pass most or all assignments, if they are submitted.

So there you have it, I have done the unthinkable and unlocked the secrets of middle school success for you. Please do not let the high-ups in the education system know. My life and job are on the line. If you get in a jam and I don't mean the PB on toast sort of jam, I've got your back. I know you're "off da hizzle fa shizzle!" and middle school will be conquered by your intelligence, wit and all-round groovyness!

Written and submitted to CDF by
"Teacher Knows Best" from
Dr. Marion Hilliard Sr. P.S.

Looking for an Alternative School?



Every alternative school is unique in its own way. Some alternative schools allow the students to bring their parents to class and some allow the students to bring their children to class. There are some schools that focus on keeping young people off the streets and there are some that concentrate on letting kids learn at their own pace. All of this and more under the umbrella of alternative schools.

The common denominator of alternative schools is that they deliver the basic curriculum in a different way. It's not about the teacher talking down to the students and telling them to "sit down," "do what you are told" and "write this test." It's about trying to make a more youth-centered learning environment and getting students to take an active interest in their education. And it's not hard to do, most kids are interested in lots of new things like getting involved in projects and going on class trips. It's a way of giving some depth to the traditional school system to make it more interesting.

Each alternative school provides a unique experience for students and teachers, depending on its focus. Here are some opinions on alternative schools.

Teacher: Anonymous
School: Ace One

"It's a place for students to be creative and a place where students can work at their own pace."

Teacher: Anonymous
School: Ace One

"We are trying to build a community amongst the schools. Every school is a little different. There are all different kinds of alternative schools. The word itself doesn't tell you enough. You sort of have to get a feel for what an alternative school is all about."

Student: Freedom, 18
School: SEE

"I switched to the School of Experimental Education because I needed more credits.

Alternative schools seemed like the best way to do that. It suited all my needs and it's chill."

Student: Aaron, 19
School: Contact

"I've been going to Contact Alternative School since October 1999. I think alternative schools are really cool. I think it's about community and getting together and working together. If it wasn't for alternative schools, I would have dropped out of school by now."

Student: Anonymous, 18
School: Seed

"I started my high school career at Danforth Tech. and I was lucky enough to be part of the gifted program there so I was already in a little of an enriched program to begin with. But once you start to get to a point in a regular school you kinda hit a wall and you need a little bit more of something. My friend suggested I try SEED. So I went and it was amazing because I'm very interested in arts and English and SEED has amazing Art program and an amazing English program. They also have so many programs that you can't find anywhere else like, Anarchist Literature, Street Art and Social Change. Where else are you going find courses like that?"

Student: Zoe, 13
School: Unspecified

"I used to go to a non-alternative school and now that I'm at an alternative school, the big difference is that the students are treated more like equals here because we call our teachers by their first names whereas in most general schools, you call them by their last names..."

Continued on page 9..

Alternative School List

Oasis Alternative School
Grades: 9-10
416-393-9830

SEE (School of Experiential Education)
Grades: 10-12
416-394-6990

SOLE (School of Life Experience)
Grades: 10-12
416-393-0756

Contact Alternative School
Grades: 9-12
416-393-1455

SEED Alternative School
Grades: 10-12
416-393-0564

The Student School
Grades: 10-12
416-393-9639

West End Alternative School
Grades: 10-12
416-393-0660

Avondale E & S Alternative School
Grades: 9-12
416-395-3130

Alternative Programs: North Region
Grades: 6-12
416-395-9124

Inglennook Community School
Grades: 11-12
416-393-0560

Subway Academy I & II
Grades: 9-12, 10-12
416-393-9466, 416-393-1445

Ask da Sexpert!

The Dangers and Delights of Internet Dating

Picking someone up on the internet these days is just as casual and common as meeting someone at a party, a recreation centre or any other public place. Heck, Web communities and internet dating is so hot right now that hip hop sensation Kanye West rhymes about it in one of his songs.

Popular internet sites such as Blackplanet.com, MiGente.com, Meetmeinto.com and Urbanpeeps.com are the perfect venues to connect with people who may interest you, whether it is your goal to find love or just friendship.

Gone are the days where one has to dress up, pay money to get into a club and then build up all their courage and strength to approach someone. No more having to rehearse your best pick up lines or worrying that you'll mess up or get rejected to your face. Now, it's all about plopping your butt down in front of a computer in your comfortable house clothes and clicking, typing and chatting to as many potential mates or dates your heart desires.

There's no easier way to talk with people. All you have to do is open your browser, type in the Web address of your favourite cyber spot to connect and interact with people. Then, you log in with your attention-grabbing username, do a search for the requirements that match your criteria and then start clicking on the names that catch your eye. BAM! You're on that person's page and if their looks and what they say on their page excites you, then you drop them a line or two. You may even leave your MSN messenger address so the person can add you to their instant messenger list and you can speed up the communication process.

Depending on how lonely or how outgoing you are, you may feel like jumping the gun and meeting someone you chatted with online right away. This isn't a smart move. Connecting with people online may be simple, but if the right precautions aren't taken then this simple situation can turn scary.

Chatting with someone online isn't like chatting to them face to face and even then, it's hard enough to figure out the truth about someone. The internet is



very much like your community; there are some good people and there are also some bad ones. Some people thrive on the anonymity of the internet and use this to prey on people. So, when meeting someone on the internet one must take measures to maximize safety and minimize disappointment. Here are some safety tips that will guide you through the internet dating process.

1. Never give out any personal details until you are completely confident and certain that the person you are communicating with is genuine. People on the internet can easily lie to you about their sex, age, weight, name, job, location, anything! Exchange e-mails or have a few online chats before you move to a phone conversation. If the person you're chatting with seems more interested in your personal details than swapping e-mails then you should think about stopping communication with them.

2. Be anonymous when e-mailing. Set up an e-mail account that is fun and that can't be tied to your identity. Keep this e-mail separate from your more serious and/or professional one you use for close friends, family and/or business. Also remember to change the name attached to your e-mails so people won't be able to

see your real name when they get mail from you.

3. Pictures are worth a thousand words.

And they can save a lot of your time if you exchange pics with the person you're chatting with. Pictures help you determine whether the person is your type physically. The tricky thing with pictures is that sometimes people will send you ones that were taken years ago. We all know how much a person can change in a year or less. So, ask the person for a recent photo. Your best shot at avoiding any surprises is to ask for a picture with a date stamp on it.

4. Never arrange to meet anyone until you have exchanged telephone numbers and spoke to each other at

least 3 times. If you are a woman, ask for the man's number and block your number when you call, at least for the first few times you talk on the phone. This will give you enough time to feel the person out and decide whether or not you want to continue communicating with them. It's important for everyone to trust their instincts when you talk to a person on the phone. If someone makes you uneasy or turns you off in anyway, a good idea would be to cease communication with them. Meeting a person who makes you uneasy won't get any better in person. Find someone else to chat with; there are plenty of spiders on the Web.

5. Safety remains first when making that first live contact.

For the initial in-person encounter, pick a public place that you are familiar with so you can get there by yourself and don't have to rely on your date to drive you there. Be sure to set the conditions of the meeting before hand and don't let your new friend change them. A good idea is to give the details of your date and the person you're meeting to a friend or family member. Another idea is to go on a double-date so you can bring your friend along for security. If you decide to just keep it at two, then make sure you stay near other people and in

lighted areas throughout the meeting. Lastly, if anything should go wrong, make sure you can positively identify the person to the police.

All these tips and safety precautions makes it seems like internet dating is more negative than positive. But I'm sure all the people who have found true love and had online success stories would beg to differ. The internet has been the meeting place for many long-lasting relationships as well as many scary and shocking dating disasters. Our readers share their experiences.

"I met the hottest chick I've seen in my life on the net. When I met her face-to-face she was so damn fine, but she was kinda stiff and uncomfortable. Me being a good guy, I asked to hold her coat when we went inside the mall, but she wouldn't let me. She kept hiding her arm under her coat and got really mad when I insisted on taking it. Later on that night, I took the coat from her and saw that she had no hand! Her fingers were missing and everything. I freaked out and I didn't know what to say. She was a really nice girl and beautiful too, but I felt like she should have told me so I could have been ready for what I was about to see. We chilled for the rest of the night, but it was really weird after the discovery. We never talked again."

~Stumped, 23, Scarborough.

"Finding love and friendships online has been nothing but the most positive experience for me. In fact, when it comes to finding relationships, it's all I know. I found my first, second and third loves online. I also met most of my friends online as well. Yea, I don't go out much and that's by choice. But why should I? I have the world right in my living room on my computer!"

~Love on the line, 22, Toronto.



da Flava's Sexpert

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

**E-mail me:
cdfsexpert@hotmail.com**

Da Sexpert will be offering advice about relationships and sex in every issue of Catch da Flava.

What's Your Beef?

Discrimination at the Hair Salon



my cut cost 25 per cent more than his. Isn't it easier to lop one or two inches off the ends of a woman's hair than to prune a whole head of locks? Isn't that why I always finish first when we get trims together?

This price disparity seems to be a universal phenomenon. Wherever I go, salons invariably charge more for women's cuts

than men's cuts. It doesn't seem to matter how complicated the job is for the stylist; for the client, the price increases with hair-length and the fact that the client is female. For example, a girl who wants to cut an inch off her waist-long hair and requires no fancy scissor-work will usual-

ly pay more than a guy who wants to shorten his shoulder-length hair to a cropped, spiky 'do with bangs. Likewise, a long-haired man will undoubtedly pay less for the same cut a woman with identically long hair would get. I suppose the rationale for all this is that women stereotypically have longer hair than men and this entails more hassle for the stylist. Along the same lines, women are supposed to be fussy about their appearance so stylists expect to spend more time on them. However, with the gender gap narrowing and fashion trends diverging, these notions aren't really true anymore. And maybe they never were. Maybe they're merely generalizations of the attitudes and behaviours of a handful of individuals. In any case, a more equitable pricing system is now called for in our modern and diverse society.

My proposal for hair salons? Charge fees for your services according to hair-length instead of gender. For example, hairstylists could set different prices for hair that is shoulder-length or shorter, and tresses that are longer than shoulder-length. They could also add surcharges for especially complicated styles, or make

deductions for simple trims.

I know this argument may seem petty, but over a lifetime, those extra dollars can add up. Suppose you're a girl and you get 6 haircuts a year, and you pay \$5 more than guys do for their haircuts (these are conservative figures). That means you would potentially be paying \$30 dollars every year for services you don't need and aren't getting, just because you're female. Over the course of your life, you could be spending thousands of unnecessary dollars (in this equation it's over \$2,000, but realistically it could be more) on your hair. And don't think it's all about the money; there are other consequences as well. The price difference between men's and women's haircuts may be indirectly reinforcing outdated and negative stereotypes about females. So the next time you visit the hair salon, talk to your stylist about their gender-prejudiced pricing. Maybe you'll convince them to give you a discount!

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

Every time my fiancé and I go to the neighbourhood salon for a haircut, I am left waiting for 10 or 15 minutes while his stylist finishes trimming and styling his hair, even if we started our haircuts at the same time. Whenever we pay the bill, I am always baffled at why

...Continued from page 7

"Alternative schools just has a differnt approach to learning; it's a lot more casual but you still learn as much as you would in a traditional school."

Student: Alexander, 12
School: Quest

"The classes at Quest Alternative are more challenging than most public schools. Even though it's a bit harder in alternative schools, the classes are smaller and the class times are shorter. The only down side about Quest Alternative School is that there are no sports teams but, they still do extra curricular sports activities so it's not at all bad."

Student: Mark, 18
School: Unspecified

"I want to go to an alternative school because it seems better than public schools. The kids in public schools seem like they don't want to learn; they just want to regurgitate everything they are taught. Alternative schools seem to be more geared towards the student than the system."

Parent Location: Toronto

"The best thing about alternative schools is that the parents are involved with their children's education. We can now understand the difficulties of the process of education our children go through and we

can help them more by being involved in the class."



da Flava's Tyrone MacLean-Wilson, 19



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Catch da Flava
Online @
www.catchdaflava.com



Radio with an Urban Youth Perspective....

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

NO!!

Should pop machines be permitted on school property?

Schools in Toronto are riddled with pop machines. These machines shouldn't be on school property. With these unhealthy drinks so readily available on school grounds, it seems like the school board is encouraging students to buy this garbage.

School is supposed to be a place where students learn how to make informed decisions in life; a place where they are encouraged to expand their minds and lead a healthy, educated lifestyle. So, it baffles my mind that the Toronto District School Board could be so hypocritical and allow all these vending machines carrying unhealthy and no-good beverages in our schools. I understand that there are government cut-backs when it comes to funding for public schools. However, when I read studies that conclude that one 12 oz. cup of pop contains 12 teaspoons of sugar and that pop contains no nutrients and only sugar, additives and artificial flavours, I wonder if the money given by Coca-Cola to public schools so that their vending machines can be in the student environment is worth it.

Not only is pop unhealthy, but pop cans are a big issue for schools when it comes to garbage. It's common to see pop cans all over the halls and in lockers, inviting insects to inhabit the walls and corners. Pop cans also litter the outside of the school and surrounding areas on school property. The members of the school board don't pick up these pop cans, the janitors do. With major cutbacks this year, schools are lucky to have one janitor during the day. Looking after an entire school with a large student body is not an easy job. Don't give the janitors more than they already have to do.

The process of eliminating pop machines is beginning. Some schools are lucky to get rid of these machines. Jesse Ketchum Public School is one of them. Just three years ago, Jesse Ketchum used to have pop machines located just outside of their gymnasium. Now they don't. By removing these pop machines, Jesse Ketchum is looking out for the students' best interest. Let Jesse Ketchum be a leading example for all public schools and the Toronto District School Board. Pop machines need to be banned from the students' environment.



da Flava's Sylvia Fung, 13,
Northern Secondary School

FACE OFF

Should soft-drink vending machines be allowed in schools?



Government budget cutbacks on public education have resulted in schools seeking corporate sponsorship and funding including deals with large conglomerates such as Coca-Cola. Recently Coke made a \$5.9 million offer to the Toronto District School Board in return for allowing access of Coca-Cola products onto public schools by inserting soft-drink vending machines on school premises. These drinks which are not the healthiest form of beverages available for youth are stirring up controversy in classrooms. Two high school students debate the issue.

For those who are against having pop machines in school, avoid buying from them and just accept the fact that they are there and people like to drink pop.

I'm sure that the majority of the students would want the pop machines in the school and it wouldn't be fair for a couple of adults, or students, who are opposed to the idea to take that advantage away from them. I think the decision about whether to have pop machines in our school lies solely in the students and it should be based on the majority not the minority.



da Flava's Crystal Fung, 16,
Jarvis Collegiate

YES!!

It's 11:50 a.m. and the school bell just rang. It signals the start of our lunch break and students are headed to the cafeteria, either to buy or eat their lunch. As you enter the cafeteria, you see rows and rows of tables and chairs, but the one thing that captures your attention is the large bright blue pop machines in the back. The variety it offers is great, from Coke to Pepsi, 7UP to Sprite and the list goes on.

Having these vending machines in school allows students to purchase soft drinks conveniently and it also gives them a wide selection to choose from. Not only do these vending machines offer pop, but they offer alternatives such as water and juice for those who don't like pop.

For the past year or so, some parents and students have spoken out, arguing that there shouldn't be pop machines in schools and that they should be banned. The students in my Civics class last year have debated this issue time and time again.

I think that this issue is a blown out of proportion and the solution to this issue is right in front of everyone's face, but most people refuse to see it.

I, along with hundreds of other students, do happen to consume pop once in a while or, even on a regular basis. Since we are the ones attending school, I feel that we should have a say on whether or not we agree to have these pop machines in school.

What's in a Name?

In five months, the city of Toronto will observe Black History Month. The mayor, city councilors and other civic leaders will be on hand to give fine speeches celebrating the achievements of people of African heritage.

Yet, when it comes time to enshrine these achievements into our everyday realities, our decision makers fall short of the mark far too often. For instance, let's consider the case of the new community centre that is being built in the St. Jamestown neighbourhood on Bleeker Street, near the corner of Wellesley and Sherebourne Streets. The city is planning to name the complex the Wellesley Community Centre. This has annoyed a small group of area residents who are advocating for it to be named the Blackburn Community Centre, in honour of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn.

The Blackburns were former Kentucky slaves that escaped to Canada and started the first taxicab business in Toronto. The successful business lasted into the 1860s, making their name part of Black Canadian history.

Murphy Browne, from the Black Action Defense Committee, is a long time resident of the St. Jamestown community and one of the Blackburn advocates. Browne feels that it's really important that the centre be named in recognition of African contribution to Canadian society. She also argues that the Blackburns had strong connections to the area.

"They started their taxi business in the King and Sackville Street area. After her husband died in 1890, Lucile lived on Bleecker Street, the site of the new community centre, until she herself died...they are both buried in the ceme-

tery at Riverdale Farm, all of which is in this community." Says Browne.

Murphy has spoken to ward representative and City Councillor Pam McConnell about this without much success. Pam McConnell supports the centre being named the Wellesley Community Centre.

According to Pam McConnell's executive assistant Blake Web, Pam McConnell feels that the name should reflect the location of the centre and that it would be more appropriate to name it the Wellesley Community Centre. He went on to say that Councillor McConnell also feels that St. Jamestown is a very diverse area and naming the centre after a black couple may not be inclusive to other cultures.

"How can naming the centre after another white male be inclusive?" exclaims Browne. A quick search on the internet reveals that Wellesley Street is named after Sir Arthur Wellesley, better known in the history books as the Duke of Wellington, a British General of Irish birth, who inflicted a crushing defeat on Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

"We already have three community centres in the area (Ralph Thornton Centre, John Innis Community Centre and Jimmie Simpson Recreation Centre) named after people of British heritage and no one has ever complained about that!" argues Browne.

Browne believes that the Blackburn's name can serve to educate other cultures about Canadian history and the contributions of black Canadians.

continued on back page...

The tale of the Blackburn family begins in Kentucky, Illinois, USA in the early 1800s. This was a time when slavery was legal in both Canada and America and African people were imported and bought and sold as property. After years of living in hardship and servitude, Thornton Blackburn and his wife Lucie decided to escape slavery and flee to Detroit, Michigan, a northern state.

Although blacks didn't enjoy the same rights as whites in Michigan at this time, by the 1830s, slavery in Canada and many states in the northern US had ended. Even so, in the US, an escaped slave was not legally considered free until they had their freedom papers signed by their former master. Due to the large number of slaves who would escape, slave hunters roamed the country in search of runaways from the South.

Two years after settling in Detroit, Lucie and Thornton were caught. The Blackburns were tried and sentenced to be sent back to Kentucky into slavery. The high-profile trial gained the sympathy of white and black Detroiters who were outraged with the decision. Huge, angry crowds, mostly made up of blacks, gathered each day outside the jail.

One day, three church women visited Lucie in jail. They stayed awhile, talked, prayed and later, three women left. The guard didn't notice that Lucie was one of the women who walked out. Lucie fled to Canada through the Underground Railroad, a network of safe houses for blacks escaping slavery. Eventually, the authorities released the church lady who had taken Lucie's place. The protesters continued to demand the release of Thornton Blackburn. Finally

the crowd, armed with clubs and guns, forced their way into the jail and fought authorities. This sparked "The Blackburn Riots of 1833," the first racial riots to take place in the city of Detroit. The riots result in Thornton Blackburn's escape to Canada, the death of the sheriff and widespread backlash against black residents of Detroit.

Thornton and Lucie settled in Toronto. Although illiterate, Thornton was an enterprising person and soon had employment as a table waiter at Osgoode Hall. During this time, he noted that Toronto lacked a public transportation system. Spurred by the urge to innovate, Blackburn obtained the patent for a horse-drawn cab. In 1837, Blackburn put the yellow and red vehicle on the street. *The City* became the first taxicab company to operate in Upper Canada.

The Blackburn business was successful and others soon followed his example. Thornton and Lucie purchased a house in the Front and Sackville Street area, where Inglenook Community High School now sits. The Blackburns became prominent and respected members of Toronto's community. Thornton died in 1890, after which Lucie sold the rest of the property to the Toronto District School Board. After Thornton's death, it's believed that Lucie resided on Bleeker Street and then died. Lucie and Thornton Blackburn are buried in the Necropolis Cemetery located in Cabbagetown, downtown Toronto.

The Blackburns were designated persons of national historic significance in 1999.

da Flava's Adonis Huggins

Do you support naming the centre after the Blackburns?



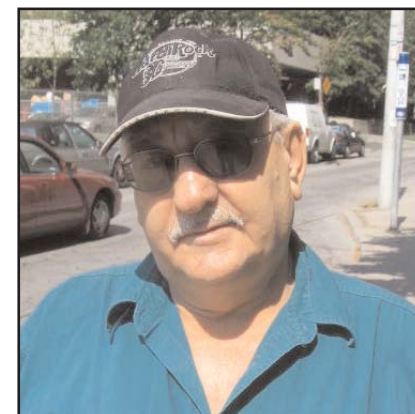
"Yes, I support it. I think it's time that they name something after black people. We have been here for a long time."



"No, the Wellesley Community Centre name is better because other buildings in the area are called Wellesley."



"I support it because it's my history and it's important to know about your history."



"Yes, it's alright with me, why not?"

REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

...continued from page 11

"Canada has long been a refuge for ex-African Americans escaping from slavery," says Browne. Browne goes on to tell the story about a seventh generation black Canadian who is continually asked which Caribbean island she is from.

"People who live and are educated in Canada don't know that African people have been in this country since the year 1606," says Browne, "beginning with Mathieu Da Costa, a black African-Canadian who spoke the language of the Mic Mac natives and interpreted for the French when they arrived in Canada."

Browne feels that it's a shame that in the year 2004, black people in Canada have to continually fight to have



Murphy Browne from the Black Action Defense Committee

their achievements and heritage acknowledged.

"I think it's a shame that there is this much resistance in naming a community centre after black Canadians. If it had been a white couple who had done the same thing there would not have been

this much conflict," says Browne.

The Blackburns teach us that people fleeing oppression and hardships could find refuge in Canada and, if we allow them, can enrich Canadian society. Their story, if we tell it, can serve as an example to all Canadians no matter their ethnic or cultural background.

The new community center will open in October 2004. Support the Blackburn Community Centre by sending an e-mail, letter or signing a petition to .

da Flava's Adonis Huggins,
research and interview
by Fénide Hérard

Regent Park Film Festival 2004

Move over Toronto International Film Festival, the Regent Park Film Festival is coming to town!

For the second year in a row, films by both local and international filmmakers will hit the big screen at Nelson Mandela Park School at the beginning of October. Yea, so you won't be seeing Jamie Foxx or Kevin Spacey in the audience or on screen, but the fest promises to be an exciting and eye-opening experience.

Chandrakala Siddananjappa, festival director, educator and filmmaker, says that the main goal of the film fest is to educate students, residents, and neighbouring areas about the diverse cultural backgrounds of Regent Park residents.

"Many people know about their own culture and don't know much about others. By watching films made by people from different countries and cultures, people in the community can learn more about themselves and others."

For Siddananjappa, the event is a



da Flava's Fos Ashkir (left), with Chandrakala Siddananjappa (right), director of the Regent Park Film Festival.

unique, "outside of the box" approach to teaching young people about multiculturalism.

"The film festival is a grassroots attempt to break this isolation, bring multiculturalism into the realm of popular education and to make youth see that through learning about themselves, empowerment and social change can happen," says Siddananjappa.

Last year, the festival focused on the South Asian experience. This year

the fest will spotlight Africa and films by Black filmmakers. It will also showcase films made in Somalia, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, China, Venezuela, the US and Canada. The films will address issues of media and democracy, gender and sexuality, identity and multiculturalism, politics and home.

What's more, youth directors and filmmakers from the Regent Park Focus Media Arts program will also have their films and videos featured. In addition, Regent Park Focus will be working with the Regent Park Film Festival committee to provide a free monthly film screening program for Regent Park residents.

The Regent Park Film Festival begins on Friday Oct. 1 at 5 p.m. with films by the youth from the Regent Park Focus Media Arts Program kicking off the event. It ends on Sunday Oct. 3. For highlights of the fest and for more information, check out the festival's Web site: www.regentparkfilmfestival.com.

da Flava's Brandi Costain
with notes and interview done by
Fos Ashkir

Regent Park Focus Happenings

2nd Annual Regent Park Film Festival

Oct 1 to October 3rd
Come see films on Africa and all around the world.

Special Showcase of Youth produced videos from Regent Park Focus: Friday October 1 at 7 PM

Nelson Mandela Park Public School
440 Shuter St.

www.regentparkfilmfestival.com

Regent Park Focus After-School Programs In Photography (Mons), Radio (Tues) and Video Production (Thurs & Fri)

For Youth ages 12 - 20 Register Now (416) 863-1094

First Fridays Monthly Film Screenings & Director Talks

Starting November 5, 2004 Presented by Regent Park Focus & Regent Park Film Festival

Call 416-863-1074

Free Yoga Classes

Wednesday 5:30 - 7:30 PM Friday 1 PM - 3 PM (Women Only) at Regent Park Focus

Information Session on the York University's Bridging Course For Women

Explore education options and prepare for future university study.

Tuesday, October 12 at 6:30 pm South Regent Park Community Centre 203 Sackville Green Call 416-7336-2100 ext.77818

Regent Park -University of Toronto Learning Exchange Program Free non-credited Courses on: Multiculturalism In Canada (8 week course) Food and Civilization (12 week course) Register Now, All Courses in English Call 416-981-6989 or 416-531-2507

Do you have questions about the design concept, Environmental Plan or other issues concerning the redevelopment of Regent Park? Contact Kelly Skeith (416)362-7755